



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MOCA PRESENTS
JENNIFER PACKER: EVERY SHUT EYE AIN'T SLEEP

July 1, 2021–February 21, 2022
MOCA Grand Avenue



LOS ANGELES—*Jennifer Packer: Every Shut Eye Ain't Sleep*, the artist's West Coast debut, features 25 new and recent works on view at MOCA Grand Avenue from July 1, 2021 through February 21, 2022, with free admission as part of MOCA's Art for All initiative. In recent years, Packer has received increasing acclaim for her intensely lyrical and emotionally nuanced portraits of friends and family members, as well as numerous floral paintings memorializing lives stopped by police violence. Rendered in virtuosic expressive style and layered intensity, Packer's paintings and works on paper surface representations of intimacy, embodiment, and loss, and mark an important new direction in figurative painting.

Produced in our present moment of incalculable grief, shaped by the ravages of the pandemic and continuing state of harm through which people of color have navigated what it means to see and be seen, the exhibition includes many depictions of figures in recline and reflection, bringing to mind the agonizing pace of life during the past year. Packer's prioritization of Black figures asserts a political imperative: to care, by way of representation, for subjects traditionally absent from the history of portraiture. She expresses an important part of this care in her virtuosic manipulation of narrative detail, composition, and line, and in the use of color that seems both candy saturation and bruise.

"I think about images that resist, that attempt to retain their secrets or maintain their composure, that put you to work," Packer explains. "I hope to make works that suggest how dynamic and complex our lives and relationships really are."

A new painting in MOCA's exhibition, *Idle Hands*, 2021, features a central figure with legs splayed, knees apart, and one arm resting across his foreshortened torso. He appears to look out at the viewer from deep inside the work's perspective, his shoulders and upper body propped up against the vague figure of a dog. Though the setting of the scene is hard to guess, the image conveys a moment of relaxation, intimacy and quietness, perhaps of friendship between species, or--as one of the man's hands holds onto the dog's leg--of subtle guardedness. Romantic and lyrical, Packer's lines move quickly and define space alternately as intensity and disappearance. Areas of focus, such as the man's over-articulated feet, jostle against phantom limbs, traces of paint, and clouded red depths. In certain places, the primary figures seem to blur, recombine, or shift in exposure, which also evokes a sense of time passing.

"The subtle affect of Jennifer Packer's work has a political as well as aesthetic dimension," says MOCA Senior Curator Bennett Simpson. "Her figures may seem to withdraw or recline from obvious visibility, but in that defiance is strength, wisdom, critique, humanity."

Packer (b. 1984, Philadelphia; lives in New York) received her BFA from the Tyler University School of Art at Temple University in 2007, and her MFA from Yale University School of Art in 2012. She was the 2012-2013 Artist-in-Residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, and a Visual Arts Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA, from 2014-2016. In 2020, she was awarded the Rome Prize for Visual Arts by the American Academy in Rome. MOCA's exhibition coincides with another, ten-year survey of Packer's work, titled, *The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing*, organized by the Serpentine Gallery, London, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Packer is currently an assistant professor in the painting department at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Jennifer Packer: Every Shut Eye Ain't Sleep is organized by Bennett Simpson, Senior Curator, with Anastasia Kahn, Curatorial Assistant, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

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General admission to MOCA for the noted exhibitions is free courtesy of Carolyn Clark Powers.

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Image credit: Jennifer Packer, *Idle Hands*, 2021, Oil on canvas, 90 x 84 inches (228.6 x 213.36 cm), Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York, Corvi-Mora, London.

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About MOCA: Founded in 1979, MOCA is the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth; a world-class permanent collection of more than 7,500 objects, international in scope and among the finest in the world; hallmark education programs that are widely-emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

More Information: For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.

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