

JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture



Danielle Mckinney, *Whisper*, 2021

Courtesy: the artist and Fortnight Institute, New York. Photo: Jason Mandella

Saw My Shadow: New Works by Danielle Mckinney

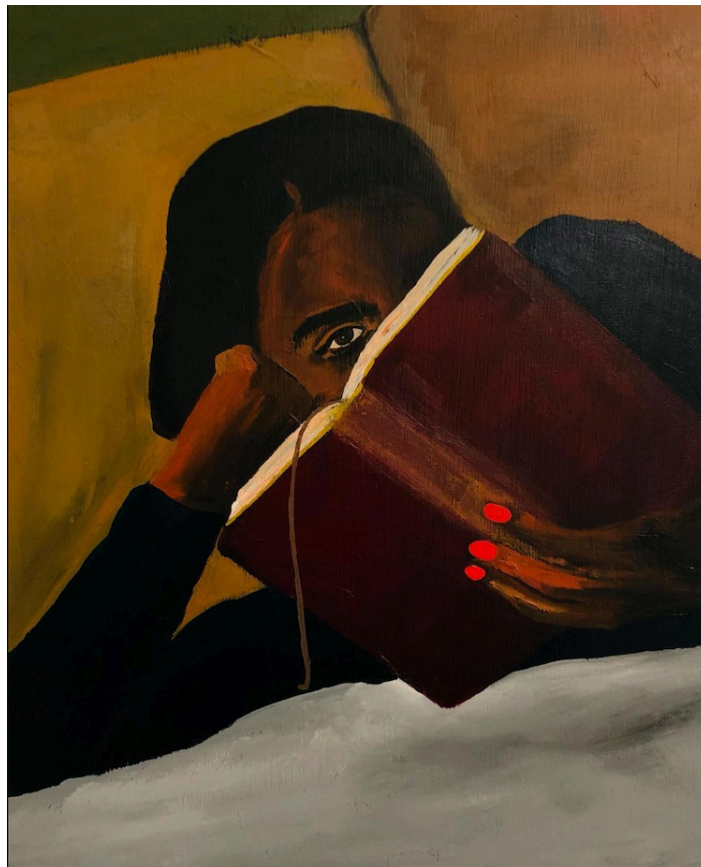
By: Evan Pricco
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I can't help but feel a cinematic romanticism in the paintings of Danielle Mckinney. And as a viewer, you tend to find yourself in these scenes. Where every moment you begin to dream up feels like just before the ending credits to a great film. You would be lying if you hadn't daydreamed this before in your life, that you hadn't placed yourself at the end of a quiet narrative. I know I have. And looking at her works, characters always in the center of the frame, I get the feeling that they are sharing my same thoughts.

In Mckinney's work, your senses get heightened to those nuances of a story. You can hear a record player in the distance, the cigarette smoke just lingers a bit longer, nothing is too loud and it's a solitary place. That she called her solo show *Saw My Shadow*, is both a nod to existence and individuality, but overwhelming sense that these female characters are themselves are listening to the same sounds and dreaming just as the viewer has begun to. A critique of Hemingway once said he "impersonated simplicity," and that, too, keeps coming up in my head. These works impersonate simplicity, as they are loaded with details and profound color use, personal and universal moments of respite, hints of religion and the art of what it is we see in ourselves and our ideal of self.

I was thinking about something in Mckinney's show that almost shocked me when I was scrolling through Instagram as I was working on this. Her characters look off-frame, or they cover their faces altogether, either with their hands or with a skin mask. But one work in particular, *The Secret Garden*, seen above, that is almost jarring in its intensity and gaze. The book, the red fingernails, this all knowing look... maybe even a little annoyance at being interrupted. We've all had that moment. Reading a good book, and someone asks you an untimely inquiry. And you throw that look. It's the essence of that individuality Mckinney channels in her works. That daydream... broken. And now her character is looking right at you.

I don't know why but I found this image as the perfect backdrop of these times, this week in particular. We talk of NFTs, this arrival of the future that was promised for decades and over the past few months has become a study in economics and collective consent (for the record, I'm not mad at it). But *The Secret Garden* and these paintings by Mckinney feel like the antithesis. Not intentional, but something more internal and self-reflective. Perhaps the soundtrack and the ending credits are about to start in this film of my head, but I don't want to forget what a good painting does to the soul. What a piercing gaze from the fold of a book means. It's impersonating simplicity, and its still damn good.



Danielle Mckinney, *The Secret Garden*, 2021

Courtesy: the artist and Fortnight Institute, New York. Photo: Jason Mandella