

Couples Therapy

Pilar Corrias Gallery, London, 2017

In collaboration with Aria Beth Sloss and Mave Fellowes



In unfamiliar or uncomfortable settings, the child will gravitate towards the familiar in order to reassure herself she is safe. We call this a 'coping mechanism'.

The horror of the snow globe, that impractical bit of wizardry. Must be childless, though she's got the soft look of a woman who's waxed and waned. Maybe this is a safe space all around. Fingerprint-free, only bodies at rest permitted through the door. Though I'd think it directly counter-theoretical to the premise -- so childish, its promise of surprise. Look, a fox! Look, a planet! Look, a trio of bored ballerinas. I

I do think the G Major chord would resolve more cleanly if the second violin pulled back a bit. Unfortunate no one listens. It's not beyond the realm of the

could stand up right now and flip one upside down. Force the predictable bloom. Let her name the accused; easy enough to single out the guilty party. *I* would like to do the unexpected. *I* would be happy to crack the shell. *I* would gladly drink whiskey on a rooftop at dawn, try tango, learn to order off a menu in Cantonese. The darkest moments are when everything is known. I'd like some

impossible to think I might get out of here without my balls severed and hung out to dry. So predictable, all of it. The lone forlorn fern, the musty smell of other people's unhappiness. I don't like the way the couch sags. I don't like the needling pain in my right metatarsal. I don't like the way that dumb cunt this morning wrecked the *adagio* with her pizzicato. It has to sing, I told her. You know singing, sweetie, don't you? A roll of blue eyes, blank as a doll's. Where they get these young idiots is a mystery. Unthinkable to contemplate a bit of

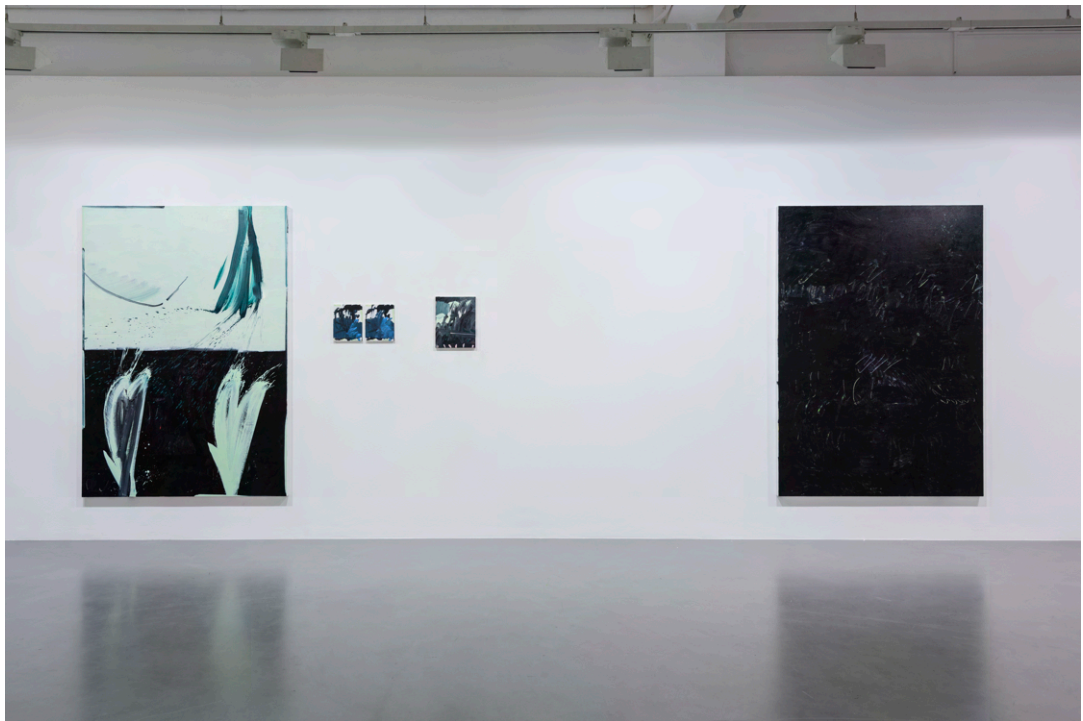
sympathy from time to time, that's all. No pocket of indulgence for the mother. No grey area, just right and wrong. Entirely different if there aren't children involved. Apples and oranges. Audra says she fixed things by giving in. Men are boys, she says. They've just discovered their dicks, can you blame them for the fascination? Sitting around all day wondering when someone will play with them. An only child like him even worse. No one ever punctured the bubble. A male only child floats through the world like a

mastery. In this day and age? Everything gone wireless. They're tuning themselves on their phones. Googling Beethoven + Sonata + *molto espressivo*. They're Facebooking and Instagramming and Snapchatting and instantaneously uploading every unremarkable thought. Any wonder the disregard for the moment, the shrug towards nuance. Hey, Professor, there's an app for that! I'm forty-nine, fuck off. The kids are cruel. Ours included. She never drew a firm line. She never said no. A mother has certain

small god. Little Buddha stroking his belly. Thank god we had two, they can scratch each other's eyes out. Practice rounds. The sooner girls understand war awaits them the less gets destroyed. Nothing is theirs for the taking. Nothing is a birthright except the double standard. A father has certain

So, she says as she shuts the door behind her, now we begin.

Aria Beth Sloss



I used to be really into singing, he says, but I don't feel like it's my thing anymore. Because she's the musical one.

That reminds her of the old boxes drawn in chalk,

You're the green one You're the sandy one

They sat at their desks. They paid attention.
They made sure to keep their feathers tucked in.

With her own children she tries to mix it up. For example,
she
might say within earshot of the one who gets soupy,

You know, he's so *gleaming*

and she would hear his heart tick louder, see his cage expand.

Or she could stand up and proclaim to the two of them, whirling,

You're both just like a Flight of Stairs!

then watch. If one grew wings, the other might begin to climb.

She's terrified by a thing she heard about how fast
the brain's pathways wither and die if they're not used. She tries to
send
messages down as many as possible, to keep their options open.

She turns and deadpans, You're really good at singing,
and feels the breeze as he flies a bit further away.

Mave Fellowes

