

**SAN LUIS OBISPO MUSEUM OF ART TO PRESENT ALYSSA MONKS: BE PERFECTLY STILL, A  
RETROSPECTIVE**

*Alyssa Monks First Museum Retrospective on View Aug 28–Nov 13, 2022*

**Wednesday, August 10, 2022 (San Luis Obispo, CA)** – The San Luis Obispo Museum of Art (SLOMA) is pleased to present the first museum retrospective by contemporary artist Alyssa Monks. The exhibition will bring together paintings that span the arc of Monks’ career, from the early 2000’s to works created during the pandemic. Through paintings that are expressive, lush, and often intimate, Monks conveys the very essence of being human through works that meditate on love, loss, and the perennial search for self.

The paintings included in this exhibition feature large-scale portraits of Monks and those closest to her, portrayed in vulnerable or intimate contexts. Often capturing fragmented elements of a scene, or layering together various spaces and moments, Monks’ works disorient the viewer and invite reflection on one’s own vulnerability. Through the use of thickly applied brushstrokes, and her tendency to flip the background and foreground in her work using semi-transparent filters of glass, vinyl, steam, water and or foliage over shallow spaces, Monks creates surface tension in her work that eschews easy interpretation of her subject matter.

“Alyssa Monks’ paintings capture something very essential about the human experience and which we can all relate to on some level,” said SLOMA Chief Curator Emma Saperstein. “I first fell in love with Monks’ work as a teenager, and my fascination with her painting has only continued to grow as her work has evolved over time. Presenting a retrospective of her work at SLOMA feels like a natural fit, as I think audiences will both be awestruck by the technical prowess of her painting, and also deeply moved by her subject matter. We feel truly honored to be able to present such a large and sweeping body of her work together for the first time.”

From her earliest works, Monks has created paintings that are at once naturalistic, expressive, and elusive. With works like “Charade” (2010) the viewer is confronted by a woman who could as easily be struggling for the surface as she could be giving herself a moment alone with her thoughts. Offering only a fractured scene, the work invites the viewer to project and reflect on their own experience, and in doing so to find empathy for the subject. With later works, such as “It’s All Under Control” (2021), Monks uses her interest in flipping fore and backgrounds to create an obscured and abstracted surface, capturing the panic and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic through a lone figure standing behind what appears as layered glass. In other works, like “Bait” (2010) Monks asserts the confidence of her subject, meeting the viewers gaze head on, capturing the strength of the painter, the viewer, and the subject.

Monks has said of her work, “My intention is to transfer the intimacy and vulnerability of my human experience into paint for someone else to connect to. Paintings are objects you need to be in the same room with to sense the energy in their surfaces. I like mine to be as intimate as possible, the painted surface like a fossil, recording every gesture and decision.”

The presentation at SLOMA is the widest-ranging survey of Monks' work to date, with paintings that span fifteen years of her career. Taken together, the paintings offer unprecedented insight into her career and practice. The exhibition reflects the museum's ongoing commitment to present works in diverse media. Following an exhibition of sculptural textile works by renowned artist Faig Ahmed, and a reflective and challenging immersive exhibition by Camille Hoffman, the museum is excited to present a body of figurative paintings by one of the leading contemporary painters of our time.

This exhibition is made possible with the support of Carmel and Naccasha Law, SLOBrew, KSBY, the City of SLO, and Marfarm.

Alyssa Monk: Be Still, a Retrospective, August 28 – November 13

Member Preview: August 26, 6-8 pm

Artist Talk: August 27, 11am

### **About The Artist**

Alyssa Monk (b. 1977, New Jersey) lives and paints in Brooklyn. Born 1977 in New Jersey, Alyssa began oil painting as a child. She studied at The New School in New York and earned her B.A. from Boston College in 1999. During this time she studied painting at Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence. She went on to earn her M.F.A. from the New York Academy of Art in 2001. She completed an artist in residency at Fullerton College in 2006 and has lectured and taught at universities and institutions worldwide. She continues to offer workshops and mentorships and lectures regularly.

Past solo exhibitions include: It's All Under Control, Forum Gallery, NY (2021-2022); Hiraeth, The Bo Bartlett Center, Columbus, GA (2020-2021); Hybrid, Pontone Gallery, UK, 2019; Breaking Point, Forum Gallery, NY (2018); Spirit Songs, Gail Severn Gallery, ID, (2018); and Resolution, Forum Gallery, NY (2016), among many others. Monks's paintings have also been included numerous group exhibitions including Intimacy at the Kunst Museum in Ahlen, Germany and Reconfiguring the Body in American Art, 1820–2009 at the National Academy Museum of Fine Arts, New York. Her work is represented in public and private collections, including the Savannah College of Arts, the Somerset Art Association, Fullerton College, the Seavest Collection, The Bennett Collection, and the collections of George Loening, Eric Fischl, Howard Tullman, Gerrity Lansing, Danielle Steele, Alec Baldwin, and Luciano Benetton. Her work was featured heavily in season 6 of the FX television series *The Americans* in 2018. She is represented by Forum Gallery in New York City.

### **About San Luis Obispo Museum of Art**

The San Luis Obispo Museum of Art (SLOMA) is the heart of the California Central Coast art community and a vital link to the cultural life of the region. It is dedicated to providing and promoting diverse visual arts experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, education, creation, and collaboration. Located at 1010 Broad Street, on the west end of Mission Plaza in San Luis Obispo, California, admission to this 501(c)(3) public benefit nonprofit arts organization is free to all. More information can be found at [www.sloma.org](http://www.sloma.org)