

**PERROTIN**

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**GaHee PARK**

*Financial Times,*  
*Couple up - the art of romance*  
*February 2023*

# THE FIX

Right: *Keg Party Casanova*, 2021, by Karyn Lyons



ART

## NEW ROMANCE

Contemporary painters are embracing modern love. *Louis Wise* couples up

**T**he art of Karyn Lyons takes us back to a horribly familiar place. In the *New Yorker's* paintings, teenage girls embrace boys, or even ghosts, or sit longing in their bedrooms for love. Luscious and mysterious, sinister and romantic, these pictures are exorcisms of desire – of those days when all you could do was sit by the phone and hope you didn't miss the call.

"It's taken me this long to look back on those moments without shame or embarrassment or guilt," admits Lyons, now in her fifties. "I'm even embracing, now, the power those moments had. It's taken me a long time not to say: 'Oh, *God*. Remember that keg party?'"

Lyons is just one artist exploring ideas of love, intimacy and romance. Doron Langberg, about to take over Victoria Miro's booth at this month's Frieze LA, has become a star with his rich, frank depictions of queer relationships, as has Brooklyn-based Jenna Gribbon, who often paints her wife. Xinyi Cheng's pairings interact in starkly tonal landscapes, while

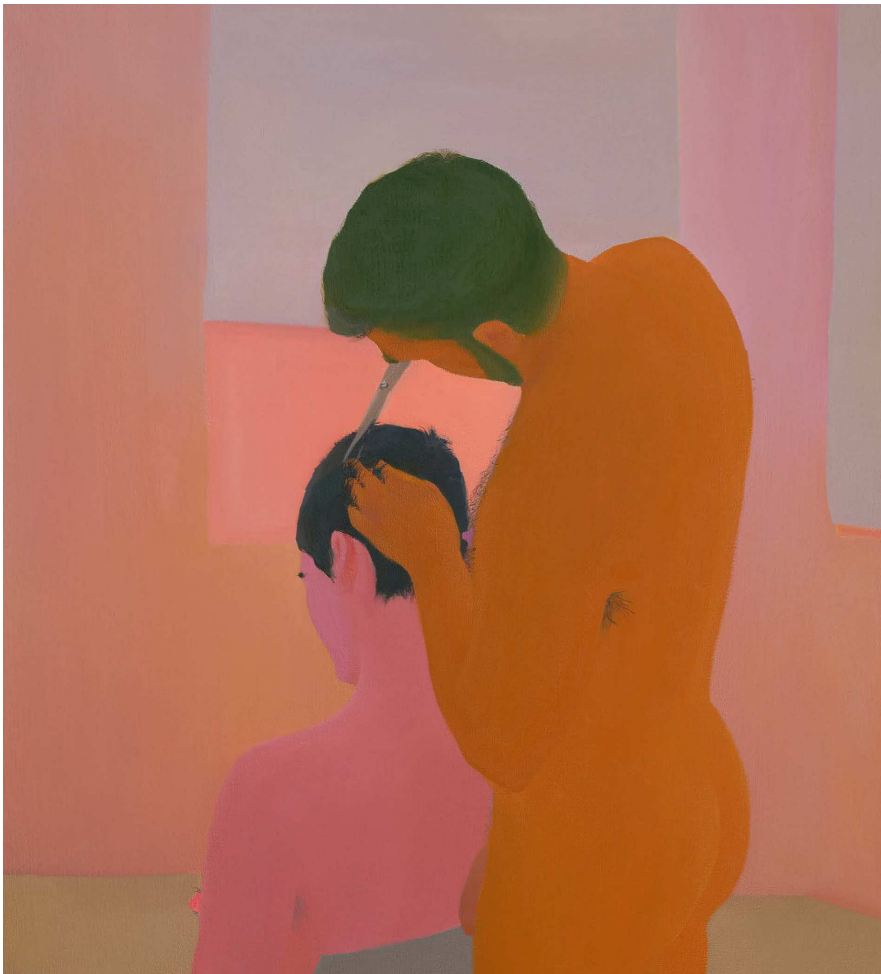
GaHee Park plays a more surrealist game.

**"IT'S TAKEN ME THIS LONG TO LOOK BACK WITHOUT SHAME"**

"I drew a lot as a child, and I was interested in images of the body and sexuality," says Seoul-born,

Montreal-based Park, who has a solo show at Tokyo's Galerie Perrotin until 25 February (paintings from \$35,000). "I'd make drawings of couples kissing and touching, or of fragmented body parts, then I would glue the drawings between two sheets of blank paper so adults didn't see them... I guess it's common, kids with Catholic upbringings, such as myself, getting naughty." It was entirely natural from an artist's perspective too. "Love and sexuality are sources of very

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intention may seem kitschy or a cop-out.” They can also not fit into current thinking, says Katerina Gregos, artistic director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens. In a show she has curated there, *Modern Love (or Love in the Age of Cold Intimacies)*, on until 28 May, artists explore the topic in the age of the internet.

“Today, issues of love mostly reside in the domain of commercial culture, in soap operas and romantic novellas,” says Gregos. “The art world is preoccupied with appearing serious and intellectually sophisticated – as if love does not merit serious intellectual interrogation.”

Langberg agrees. “Things that are beautiful and effeminate and sensitive, and are about feelings and desires, are kind of looked down on,” says the Israeli-born, Brooklyn-based painter. “For years, I really tried to fight against it – like it’s schmaltzy or kitschy. It’s uncool. But I think that the response to my work began to transform once I really leaned into it.”

**LANGBERG HAS, IN FACT,** gained huge traction for his often highly explicit portrayals of lovers and friends, with prices for his last show in London reaching \$80,000. Both this subject matter and his way of painting are “kind of indulgent and romantic”, he admits (he is fond of exuberant colours, with a special thing for

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Above left: *The Haircut*, 2014, by Xinyi Cheng. Left: *Couple in a Field*, 2022, by GaHee Park. Below: *Friends*, 2022, by Doron Langberg

