

# ARTFORUM



LONDON

Ilana Savdie

WHITE CUBE | BERMONDSEY

144 – 152 Bermondsey Street

July 8–September 11, 2022

Ilana Savdie, *The Mouth briefly shut itself*, 2022,  
Oil, acrylic and beeswax on canvas stretched on panel, 72 x 67"

“In Jest,” Ilana Savdie’s first solo show in Britain, offers a marshaled profusion of monstrous forms, glossy surfaces, cellular patterns, animal parts, gobbets of decaying human flesh, and huge expanses of unevenly saturated color. At first glance, the licks and curls of paint suggest Helen Frankenthaler or Lee Krasner gone fluorescent, but Savdie interrupts the surface of her abstractions with figurative elements sourced from her drawings and manipulations of images found in the digital realm (for instance, microscopic views of viruses or a clown’s performance ritual posted on social media). Look closely and you might see a torso, a parasite, a manicured nail. These details yield little shocks; There is no fixed sum of their parts.

The lurid hues and restless parasitic forms recall the abstract works of Dorothea Tanning, who represented the body as splintered and full of kaleidoscopic luminosity. *Paraphylectics*, 2022, invites comparisons to horror and science fiction: At its center a white body descends into swirls of black washes, grasped by two hooded figures with claws instead of hands. In this exhibition, painterly accretion is predominant. But there is something textural at play, too: Savdie subjects the canvases to her technique of “masking,” covering acrylic and oil with beeswax. In *The Mouth briefly shut itself*, 2022, subtle ripples and indents emerge across the vast stretch of gold. For *Chronic irritations (Collective edging)*, 2022, the intensity of color creates a sort of mirage. The hues seem to stream down the top of the canvas, their shifting depths and layers never quite settling. Savdie, it seems, prefers her universe fluid and volatile.

— Matthew Cheale