



Invisible Art Space
141/2-18 Buchanan St Balmain



Elizabeth Rankin

The Image of Her

05-27 September 2026

Elizabeth Rankin

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman
Simone de Beauvoir

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir sketches a kind of existential history of a woman's life: a story of how a woman's attitude towards her body and bodily functions changes over the years, and of how society influences this attitude. Here, de Beauvoir raises the core question of female embodiment: Are the supposed disadvantages of the female body actual disadvantages which exist objectively in all societies, or are they merely judged to be disadvantages by our society? A woman's body is the site of this ambiguity, for she can use it as a vehicle for her freedom and also feel oppressed by it.

De Beauvoir argues that it is not the biological condition of women that constitutes a handicap: it is how a woman construes this condition which renders it positive or negative. None of the uniquely female experiences – the development of female sex organs, menstruation, pregnancy, menopause – have a meaning in themselves; but in a hostile or oppressive society.

In this exhibition, Elizabeth Rankin does not portray perfect bodies, or exaggerated imperfect bodies, but the bodies of older women and pregnant women with the changes that these two things bring. The hands of the women deny total access to their bodies and at the same time are self-caressing and self-defining. Included is a painted dress that her painted women might enjoy, with images painted on the cloth to extend the meaning of the forms. Dress is the new skin chosen to mask or display the self and here stands just as itself untethered to a body. Related to this is Rankin's short video *Thin Ice*, in which hand drawn watercolour images of women celebrate the body through dance. The fluttering shapes quiver and twirl to a pattern in adjusting patterns and groupings in silent agreement.

Exhibition runs 05-27 September. Gallery open sat+sun 12-3pm. Drinks with the artist sat 05 + sun 06 September

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