

**PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release

***Wabi-Sabi: Untangling the Meaning of Beauty***

***Group Exhibition – Paul Smith Space, June 2026***

***Curated by Marcelle Joseph***



**Anna Ilesley  
C Lucy R Whitehead  
Chechu Álava  
Gal Schindler  
Grace Mattingly  
Harriet Gillett  
Lindsey Mendick  
Sophie von Hellermann  
Susie Green**

**Paul Smith Space**

9 Albemarle Street, London W1S 4BL

**Exhibition Dates: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2026 – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2026**

**Opening: 4<sup>th</sup> June 2026, 6 - 8 pm**

Image above: Anna Ilesley, *Nymph* (2025), oil on canvas, 140 x 180 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Paul Smith Space proudly presents Wabi Sabi: Untangling the Meaning of Beauty, a group exhibition curated by Marcelle Joseph, showcasing the work of nine female-identifying figurative artists who seek beauty in balance and harmony as well as the imperfection of life.

The concept of wabi-sabi, with roots in ancient Zen Buddhism, originates in Japan. Whilst *wabi* translates to less is more, *sabi* refers to attentive melancholy, an awareness of the transient nature of earthly things and a corresponding pleasure in those that bear the mark of this impermanence. Each of the artists in this exhibition create quiet, intimate artworks that clamour for beauty in everyday life. Utilising a spare organic line, a pale palette, or a judicious use of negative space, these artists construct harbours of solace in their works in direct contrast to our increasingly chaotic time on planet Earth. This economy of line, form and composition in the works represents an understated aesthetics that could be interpreted as 'wabi-sabi'.

In many ways, the modest form of expression employed by each artist draws similarities to ikebana - the single flower in a vase that everyone bows to before taking their place at the tea ceremony table. And like the tea ceremony, these artworks emphasise direct experience over verbal explanation, just as wabi-sabi is best understood in a non-verbal experiential way.

This type of beauty does not, however, correspond to the notions of ideal beauty espoused by the Ancient Greeks, or contemporary Western culture, steeped in patriarchy and late-stage capitalism. As Emma Dabiri writes in *Disobedient Bodies: Reclaim Your Unruly Beauty (2023)*, "here others have prioritised balance, the achievement of harmony and the movement of flow, hegemonic Western culture is framed by the oppositional categories of good and bad, beautiful and ugly, perfect or flawed." Yet, throughout non-Western history, Dabiri notes that beauty is sought within 'the nature of things.' It is found "not in products; not in things but in the relationships among them. Beauty is something you do, not just something you are."

Painting and sculpting are activities, ones just like the ancient Japanese arts of the tea ceremony, and the cultivation of bonsai. Like the tranquil simplicity found in these activities, the beauty sought by these nine artists is a state of mind, reminding us to slow down and take comfort in the natural beauty around us, however imperfect or impermanent it may be.

## **About Paul Smith Space**

Paul Smith Space is a dedicated art programme presenting artwork which resonates with the company's ethos of creativity, individuality, and curiosity. A full programme of exhibitions will see Paul Smith Space change periodically throughout the year, each time introducing an exciting new array of work.

### **Contact:**

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