

IN THE FLESH WITH SHARON SPRUNG

By Krystle Stricklin

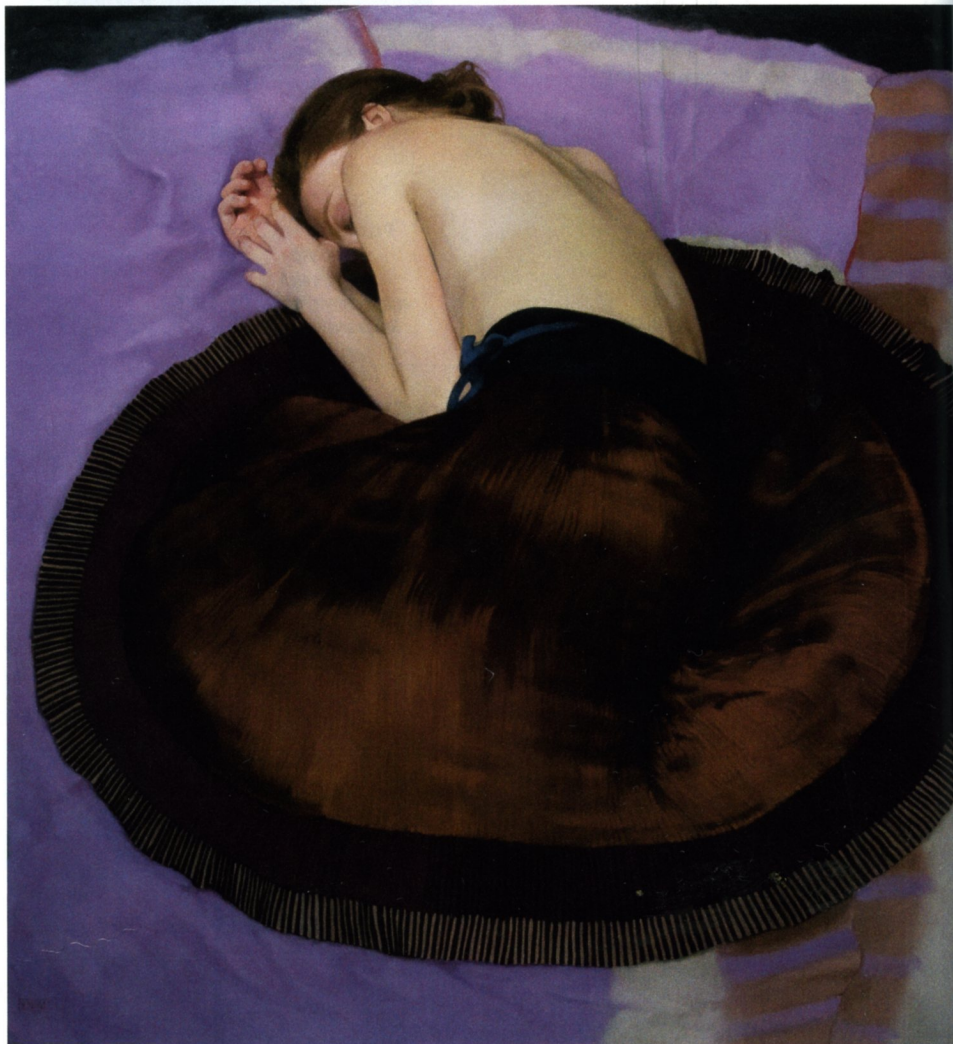
Unveiling spotlights a recently completed portrait commission from some of the best and most active members of the Portrait Society of America, or it showcases an event involving Portrait Society of America artists. This month Krystle Stricklin, Cecilia Beaux Forum Coordinator at the Portrait Society of America, writes about Sharon Sprung's recent solo exhibition at Gallery Henoeh.

“**T**he flesh is the surface of the unknown.” — Victor Hugo

For centuries, the subtleties of flesh have brought artists inspiration and anguish. The blush of a cheek, a wrinkled smile, the delicacy of a shoulder, a pair of calloused hands—every aesthetic production of corporeal existence has come wrought with the artist's desire to bring life to canvas. In this rich tradition, Sharon Sprung holds an intimate and compelling relationship to the painterly pursuit of flesh, and her portraits express an uncanny perception of human vitality and temperament. This past fall, Sprung's newest works of fleshly fascination were displayed in a solo exhibition, *Flesh*, at Gallery Henoeh in New York City.

The matter of flesh is ever-present in Sprung's mind, as exemplified by using the word to represent her solo show. On the topic Sprung says, “It is the most difficult thing to paint for the artist—to breathe life into, with every small shift of light as the color changes, as the temperature changes, with a change of emotion, anger, a lifetime of boredom in the expression, or a subtle vitality. To learn how to read these, how to understand flesh is the most absorbing and complex endeavor I know.” Commenting further, she remarks, “To a painter of people, flesh is our life's blood; flesh is exquisitely sensitive to heat, cold, sun, water, sound, and emotions. If one learns how to look effectively, it vividly describes life—the uniqueness of our being—it displays our strengths and our vulnerabilities.”

The show included the triptych *See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil*. In this work, Sprung's model stands unyielding against a red background, while mimicking the hand gestures of the title's proverbial saying. Also among the works was *Vortex*, a depiction of a recumbent woman amid a silken pool of amber and violet. Sprung's works, both intimate and engaging, leave viewers with the sense that they are witnessing a private moment, a stolen glance into the model's



Vortex, oil on panel, 40 x 40"

soul. Sprung elaborates, “People are remarkable, their aspirations and accomplishments, and the obstacles perhaps not yet overcome, still etched delicately into their faces. By the very act of immersing oneself in the visual study of the human form, one forges a connection to the soul.” In each show piece, Sprung demonstrates her ability to convey the “exterior” surface of

human existence—our skin—as well as the interior landscape of the soul. ●

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