WAX MOON FACES
EMILY DAVIS ADAMS & LINDSAY MERRILL

May 25 – June 21, 2024

OPENING: Saturday, May 25th, from 6-8pm
86 Walker St, New York, NY 10013

The comfortable people want only wax moon faces, poreless, hairless, expressionless. We are living in a time when flowers are trying to live on flowers, instead of growing on good rain and black loam.

-Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

In Bradbury's iconic dystopian novel, a character and lover of books and art reflects on the allure of objects and cultural experiences—the wax moon faces—that avoid the complexity and details of human experience and deny the materiality and frailty of earthly life. He suggests it is because books "show the pores in the face of life" that the authoritarian regime in which they live has set them all aflame.

Wax Moon Faces, a show of new paintings by **Lindsay Merrill** and **Emily Davis Adams**, takes its title from Bradbury's writing for both its literary reference as well as its poetic suggestion. Both artists use representation to describe fabricated figurative objects, which glow with artificial light, in decontextualized formats and settings. Together, the paintings conjure emotional narratives and relational dialogue between iconic, if unexpected, subject matter.

Merrill's paintings focus specifically on a collection of store-bought illuminated plastic crèche figurines, posed at night on nondescript lawns. While the figures are identifiable as weathered replicas of the holy family, Merrill emphasizes details that evoke a sense of loss or sadness. The objects, radiating an eerie illumination, appear with scrapes from wear and tear that seem almost woundlike, while extension cords disappear into an inky darkness. One small painting serves to contextualize the home of Merrill's holy family: a small house seen glowing in a distant night between two well-lit foregrounded trees, a nod to the rural town in West Virginia where the artist spends much of her time.

Adams uses painting as a connective tissue relating representations of the idealized human form. Her subjects are drawn from historical and contemporary sculpture, androids made by robotics companies, and publicly available generative AI programs. Focusing mostly on female representation, the paintings are made with a unifying technical narrative which, together with cropping, obscure the specificity of each figure and point to interconnections between them. Their slightly larger than life size evokes an intimacy and relationship to the viewer. Adams employs a cool palette to reflect the cold light of the computer from which she generates her references.

The objects depicted in both artists' paintings can be read as objects of devotion, of possession, of fetishization, of critical analysis. They are stand-ins for personal experiences and culturally perpetuated stories. The paintings themselves are also objects: of contemplation and communication.