

OVERDUIN & CO.

PRESS RELEASE

Caitlin Keogh

“Waxing Year”

February 14th – April 3rd, 2021

Overduin & Co. is pleased to present the exhibition, “Waxing Year” by Caitlin Keogh. This will be the artist’s first solo exhibition in Los Angeles and will include a group of new paintings and ten collages that respond to a poem by the writer, Charity Coleman.

For this exhibition, Keogh presents seven individual paintings that can connect, compositionally, from side to side to show one continuous image. The overall picture is based on a collage made from reference material accumulated over years in the studio including drawings, tracings, and print outs that were arranged in a frieze. The composite was rendered to form a long drawing which became the study for the paintings. This composition was divided into lengths corresponding to the paintings’ canvases.

In discussing the work for this exhibition Keogh writes,

There are three bodies that animate these paintings.

The first is the body of Piet Mondrian, buried in the ground near my studio in Queens. In late March of 2020, I walked to Mondrian’s grave site with a friend to give him some flowers and to sit outside and talk. Our conversation was about what we knew and didn’t know about Mondrian and I realized I knew almost nothing. I had admired his paintings for years, thought about them often, read theoretical texts on the meaning and importance of his work, but did not know much else. I had never imagined him as a physical person. Suddenly imagining him with a corporeal existence was something of a shock. His grave is austere, non-denominational, and situated to point the visitor directly towards his last and favorite studio in Midtown. (For someone preoccupied with the grid of the city, I can’t imagine this is a coincidence.) I knew nothing about Mondrian’s personality, biography, and physical appearance. According to my education, I realized, he was pure theory, as though the paintings had been produced by an algorithm. I couldn’t picture his face, despite his iconic status. Since this visit, I have spent time with his writings on paintings, spiritualism, and politics, and looking at his less-known paintings and drawings. Reading this has been instructive, to consider that he loved to leave his studio in the afternoon to go dancing at jazz clubs and was an austere dandy who owned few possessions and was very interested in the interior design of his studio.

The process of composing these continuous paintings was informed partly from reading Mondrian’s writings. He emphatically insists on the canvas as being an urgent and vital plane, a sort of game board with which to test out rules for a vision of utopian equilibrium, the compositional edges as the limits of a force field with which he could define perception as it ought to be for a free, harmonious future. I took from his writings questions to do with taking paintings apart to more basic elements and reconstructing, intuitively, a fluid and elastic space. While Mondrian established the edge of the picture plane as the ultimate metaphor for delineating the rules of his painting –and social– vision (he had a short falling out with Theo van Doesburg over the diagonal line meeting the edge, which to Mondrian was not a matter of taste but rather of ideology; the oblique, unlike the perpendicular, was not a concentrated and pure enough vision of space and time to declutter the past and move boldly into the future), I, conversely, considered my anxiety around the painting’s edge in relation to the representational imagery in my work. The edge of the canvas is the restraint that imposes narrative and hierarchy onto the picture plane if composing a picture with recognizable “things” and therefore was a liberating restraint to remove.

The second body is that of my beloved therapist. Three days after visiting Mondrian’s grave, spending time reading about his manners and material life, my therapist suddenly died. I was informed very soon after she passed, and the shock of her disappearance expressed itself in the form of dreams in which I was the person who discovered her body. I would find her in the grass, or lying on the floor of her bathroom, or on a pebbly beach at the shore. She never looked like herself and I would need to insist that I was finding the person I claimed I found. My therapy had recently

gone in the direction of dream analysis and now the person who I relied on to interpret the dreams was making her exit through that medium. In both the case of visiting Mondrian and being visited by my therapist as I slept, there was the effect of a prompt to interpret, and interpret loosely and intuitively. And the realization of something or someone that I had held in a stable place of understanding needed to be reevaluated and reconstituted. Without the ritual of my therapy in which to free-associate between words and the images of dreams, I have reconstructed this space, of looking at and through the accumulation of images, within my paintings. The paintings are not a recreation of a dream, but move along according to the dream-model of an accumulation of images as an internal logic and an interpretive mirror.

The third body is a metaphorical one, the figure of the Waxing Year. This comes from Robert Graves's book, *The White Goddess*, about pagan poetry. I have been interested, since I started painting the figure, in the construction of subject positions in relation to making pictures, especially as they deal with gendered narratives in connection with creative production, and literary criticism is usually where I find the most elaborate and potent models. A subject position is not a rigid pose for me, but rather a para-explanation for the development of work, a way to sublimate the personal into "someone else" and make more slippery the terms of self and depiction. The Waxing Year is for Graves the eternal figure of the poet, who is also the embodiment of the year progressing forward from winter into budding spring into blossoming summer. The task of the poet is to battle the Waning Year, which is time disappearing and growing smaller before it. Graves calls this antihero the Waxing Year's shadow, his dark side, or his "weird". This struggle between growing and shrinking is performed in honor of the eternal energy of the White Goddess who is the fickle muse to all who labor to make poems. This retrograde gendering and spiritualizing has been an appropriate place to start for my painting project of reconstructing known/unknown figures.

I like to imagine Mondrian as a tempestuous goddess with a passion for spontaneous dancing to jazz music, uncompromising in her painting credos and insistence on the struggle for freedom and harmony in the studio. If these paintings exist in any literal, specific space it is underground. The image of the decomposing body of Mondrian becoming earth, and the subterranean realm of dreams emerging from the subconscious. If I had previously been imagining a canvas as a torso, in this project the torso has disintegrated into a continuous field.

Caitlin Keogh (b. 1982 in Anchorage, Alaska) lives and works in New York. Solo exhibitions of Keogh's work have been presented by the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston and MoMA PS1 in New York. Keogh's paintings will be included in *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century* at the Berkeley Art Museum in California later this year. Keogh's work has also been featured in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, MoMA Warsaw in Poland, Künstlerhaus Bremen in Germany, and the Queens Museum in New York. A monograph on Keogh's work, *Headless Woman with Parrot*, has been published by Triangle Books in Brussels.

The gallery is currently open by appointment only, Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 5pm. For further information and images, or to make an appointment, please contact the gallery at office@overduinandco.com.