

Sarah Crowner
Plant Based

“Plant Based” is Sarah Crowner’s first major solo exhibition in Germany. On view are seven lush sewn canvas paintings executed over the course of this spring and summer. They will be exhibited alongside a group of new stone sculptures, a body of work the artist has not yet shown before.

Sarah Crowner’s work tests the boundaries of abstract painting and sculpture while also engaging in the legacy of abstract vocabularies, deriving inspiration from nature and everyday life. Her transdisciplinary practice encompasses many ideals that were significant for the Bauhaus (1919-1939). Traversing the fields of the applied and fine arts, she maintains an approach to image-making guided by experimentation, immediacy, and spontaneity. Using the process-based logic of collage, Crowner carefully builds her paintings by rearranging and sewing painted and raw panels of cut and shaped canvas, thus connecting painting with the physical and the corporeal. She has often installed them as backdrops or props for performances or placed them alongside tiled floors and platforms, thus opening up the paintings to their environment and finding ways of integrating time and motion into the medium of painting. Her works take on the form of theatre curtains, ceramics, swimming pool designs, tiled murals and stage sets: In a recent commission for the Guggenheim Museum’s Wright Restaurant, she revisits the Bauhaus’s goal of combining aesthetics with everyday function.

The works in the exhibition are based on Crowner’s continuous interest in botanical forms and shapes, observations from the view outside her studio in Brooklyn and walks in the countryside. Although they might evolve from the same shapes, every painting has its own personality or character, standing out for its individuality and distinct dynamic of colour and edge. Many of them are reduced to a two-tone composition. Fields of raw canvas, intricately structured by seam lines, contrast with shapes in brilliant colours—sunny yellows, glowing violets or rich blues. The paint application is finely modulated, from semi-transparent to dense, and delicately textured by the brush and the grain of canvas, recalling watercolour or Helen Frankenthaler’s stain technique. In many paintings the pulsating contrasts and the rhythmic repetition of similar shapes suggest growth and expansion. The large canvas “Night Blooming” has a similar feel of movement with its sequence of hard-edge elongated shapes in varying shades of blue animated by opulent brushwork. Together the works form a whole of correspondences invigorated by the dissonances and contrasts between them.

The process of the metamorphosis of forms and patterns that the artist explores in various media has recently led to a new body of sculptures made from natural stone. They evolved out of Crowner’s exhibition at the Mexico City branch of the gallery in 2019, which focused on “paintings as seen through the lens of jacaranda plants”, and are made from Mexican onyx and sodalite. The eight maquette-sized sculptures are conceived of as pairs of the same mirrored organic shape. Like pieces of a puzzle, each pair unfolds a play of formal interactions between foliage-like shapes and the negative space between them. Their loose arrangement on a pedestal emphasizes mutability and change and, like the paintings, confirm the limitlessness of abstraction. There is a fascinating tension between their biomorphic forms and the rich texture of the stone. The natural material catches and refracts the light cast through the large gallery window and imbues them with a sense of depth, colour nuance, and differentiation. Fluidity is key to Crowner’s work. The paintings and sculptures engage in a dialogue with the world around them—here the linden trees in front of the gallery windows with their shadows crossing the exhibition floor in the afternoon.

Sarah Crowner was born in Philadelphia in 1974; she lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Upcoming exhibitions and projects include The Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico in 2022 and a large-scale commission for the US Embassy of Honduras in 2022. Recent projects include individual and group exhibitions at KMAC Museum, Louisville (2018); a participation in the 57th Edition of Carnegie International (2018); the permanent installation at the Wright Restaurant, Salomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2017) and the solo exhibition “Beetle in the Leaves” at MASS MoCA, North Adams (2016). She has participated in various group exhibitions at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Bruxelles (2013), the Jewish Museum, NY (2015), and MoMA, NY (2013), among others. In 2013 she participated in a major survey exhibition on abstract painting at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. She was part of the 2010 Whitney Biennial curated by Francesco Bonami and Gary Carrion-Murayari. Her works have been shown at White Columns, NY, Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, ICA in London, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, de Appel in Amsterdam, Culturgest in Lisbon (all 2009), as well as DAAD Galerie, Berlin (2008). Recently, Crowner designed the scenography and costumes for Jessica Lang’s “Garden Blue” with the American Ballet Theatre, NY (2018) as well as the scenography for a revival of Robert Ashley’s “Perfect Lives” (2012), which travelled to Marfa, Texas and then on to venues in Europe. This is Sarah Crowner’s fourth solo exhibition at Galerie Nordenhake.

Exhibition: September 11–October 23, 2021**Opening hours: Tue–Sat 11am–6pm****Please contact the gallery for further information and press images**

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