

★ STARS ★

Shuriya Davis  
*Never in Your Sun*  
November 13–January 15, 2022

STARS is pleased to present its first exhibition by Alabama-born, Oakland-based artist Shuriya Davis (b. 1996), *Never in Your Sun*. The eleven paintings on view are from a larger body work developed this year in a process that began as an expanded exploration of self-portraiture—or more specifically, of using ideas of oneself as models to animate a range of imagined alternative societies. As the show evolved, it grew into an odyssey unbounded by representational targets. Davis recused herself from the notion that these paintings take any entity as subject, and more broadly, from a vision of bodies and worlds existing in any recognizable spatial hierarchy.

Davis acknowledges that characters inhabit these canvases, noting that they are not premeditated. Instead what guides their shapes and surroundings is color. Some of these paintings work towards a deeper understanding of a color, or seek to construct a vessel that can hold the feeling of a specific harmony or dissonance of hues. Davis speaks about mistakes that happen along the way and not about corrections. She surfaces beauty as a framework that controls how humanity can be perceived as real and how reality can be perceived as human. Are we somewhere? Landscapes hinted at by horizons or celestial spheres feel fantastical and alive themselves. There are characters missing feet and eyes. Some characters are formless. Many have features like full lips, big eyes and thick hair are legible as afrocentric, while they are not overtly Black.

The work's materiality as paintings is strikingly resonant with art historical precedents without forfeiting any of its own gravity anchored in the present. Rather than strive to defy convention (to actively disengage—from representation, for instance—an oxymoronic pursuit), Davis, a newly exhibiting painter who is working among peers in an academic context, is deeply engaged with her medium. If there is a common thread between the scenes, it is a sense of becoming, equally mysterious and mystical, which has been captured in compositions that provoke racing reflections in a viewer, but lend their substance to a spirit of flux.