

« HydeRunner »
a solo exhibition by Sequoia Scavullo

June, 8 – July 28, 2023

For *HydeRunner*, her first solo exhibition at the gallery Sans titre, Sequoia Scavullo (b. 1995 in Baltimore, USA; lives in Paris) presents an ensemble of eight new paintings accompanied by a video. Through force of color expression, density of material, and a style of representation that borders upon abstraction, Scavullo explores manifestations of non-verbal communication with regards to emotion. Born on her father's side to a family of Tainos - an indigenous people of the Caribbean - Scavullo is inspired by the Taino technique of dream analysis and its culture's holistic approach to the world. In the context of healthcare, this latter takes into account the human being in its totality, both body and spirit, contrary to the approach of western medicine. Transposing this idea to painting, Scavullo employs color as a mediator of emotional states, leading, ideally, to a restorative synesthetic experience.

Consisting of consecutive layers of paint, most of Scavullo's canvases are covered until their surface is pure materiality. From a distance, these ranges of colors, which play with slight color gradients, sometimes recall the work of Georgia O'Keeffe. On closer inspection, this set of layers produces a sense of depth and thickness that subtly matches what appears to be depicted: a cave, hair, water, or half-hidden figures behind a veil, such as in *Il y a un regard enfin pour voir vos paupières fermées*. (There is finally a gaze to see with your eyelids closed)

The choice of tones, the color gradients, and the interplay of undulating lines come to enrich these representations with a material sensation of humidity and movement. Like magma, which varies from pink to red, passing through orange to reach sometimes darker tones, the color here is a manifestation of a vocabulary linked to the body. The pink-red-orange – I almost wrote *organ*, as if the choice of colors instilled a linguistic disorder, a confusion of words – corresponds to the colors of flesh, of muscles, and everything found under the skin. The moist red-pink gives life to the lips and the interior of a mouth in *I now understand it was never yours to keep*, while in other works, bodily mucous membranes linked to the sexual organs imperceptibly emerge. Finally, pink, a color implicated in sexual determinism and relationships of domination, is here intended to be more dangerous than girly. *Thanks Fara* or *How did you do it Persephone?*, like many canvases in the exhibition, invite us to sink into color, to penetrate to the interior of the body to see what's happening there.

As titles such as *If I can't have you no one else will* or *A very hot painful day where my only movement was my fingers tracing a heat map of my angel's wooden floor* suggest, Scavullo's compositions refer to personal stories or dreams. Whether about love, pain, or a relationship to death, they are converted into material that is thick and fluid, sensual and ambivalent, in perpetual motion. Even more so than the body interior, it's the motif of the cave that predominates, as a receptacle for the circulation of emotions. Like a volcano containing magma, this place is symbolically that of the subconscious, of a prenatal or post-mortem state, one connecting the past to the present, life to death, bodies to the beings together. *How did you do it Persephone?* perfectly represents this

state of transition, between the entrails and the surface of the earth. The Greek goddess Persephone is associated with the cycle of the seasons, as she spends eight months of the year during spring and summer upon earth, before returning, during the darker months, to the subterranean world of her husband Hades, God of the underworld.

In revealing this existential inner world, Scavullo offers a platform to the invisible and the unspeakable. To let oneself be carried away amid these subterranean layers, at the heart of this pictorial volcano, renders palpable that which, in our Western society, often tries to stake its place, but is continually thwarted by rationality: the power of non-verbal communication.

Oriane Durand
(translated by Aaron Ayscough)

Sequoia Scavullo (born in 1995, Baltimore) lives and works in Paris. She studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris with Mimosa Echard.

The artist has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Kunstverein Bielefeld (2022); Pigment Sauvage, Baltimore (2019). In October 2023, she will have a solo presentation at Paris+ by Art Basel with Sans titre, Paris.

Her work has been shown in group exhibitions at FRAC Corsica (2023); After Hours, Paris (2023); Palais des Beaux-Arts, Paris (2022); Exo Exo, Paris (2022); POUISH - Manifesto, Paris (2021); Haimney Gallery, Barcelona (2020); La Volonté, Paris (2020); Dorchester Art Gallery, Boston (2019); Piano Craft Gallery, Boston (2019); High Zero Foundation, Baltimore (2019); Barbara and Steve Grossman Gallery, Boston (2019); Yale Norfolk Galleries (2019).

The artist received the Diptyque price for contemporary art, curated by Jérôme Sans (2022); the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Prize (2021); the Dean's Research Award (2019); the Dona Pond Painting Award (2019) and the Will and Elena Barnett Painting Award (2017).

She has participated in the KHIAL NKHEL residency program, Morocco (2018) and the Yale Norfolk program, Ellen Battell Stoeckel (2017).

Oriane Durand is an independent curator and author based in France and Germany. She studied art history at the Sorbonne-Paris IV and the Freie Universität in Berlin, graduating with a Postgraduate degree in Performance and Body Art in Germany. Between 2015 and 2020, she directed the Kunstverein of Dortmund. Previously, she worked as a curator for the Kunstverein Nuremberg and the Bonner Kunstverein. In August 2020, she founded the independent exhibition space Le Berceau in Marseille. She writes regularly for Frieze Magazine and other exhibition catalogs. A keen prospector and discoverer of young international artists, she curated the first institutional solo shows in Germany of Raphaela Vogel, Sol Calero, Elaine Cameron-Weir, Mimosa Echard, Sara Sadik and Sequoia Scavullo.