

GREENE NAFTALI

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Aria Dean *Figuer Sucia*

May 11 – June 17, 2022
8th Floor

Greene Naftali is pleased to announce its second solo exhibition with Aria Dean. The show's title pairs the Spanish word for "dirty" with a deliberate misspelling of "figure"—a loose summation of Dean's approach to the subject as a tainted construct that endures. Her visual practice is often rooted in language yet takes over where rhetoric fails, giving way to what can only be sensed before it can be said. *Figuer Sucia* marks a shift from the tidier task of deconstruction toward the visceral effects of deformation: when the thing in question is not picked apart but contorted and altered, confronting us with its new reality.

Extending Dean's ongoing pursuit of art that models the structure of Blackness—as a blurring of the symbolic and material registers—*Figuer Sucia* continues in the vein of her recent Renaissance Society exhibition, *Abattoir U.S.A.!* Using similar technological solutions to challenge the capacity for representation, here Dean produces a solid object by decidedly virtual means. Her latest set of sculptures derive from a figurine of a Friesian warhorse ("figuer," it turns out, is an archaic spelling in the Germanic dialect of Old Frisian). The small plastic toy was scanned and multiplied to produce 3D replicas that sustained a battery of simulated collisions. The resulting sculpture gives plastic form to the outcome of this born-digital event, painted in the same primer gray favored by the software that supplied it. As Dean describes the work's peculiar order of operations, "real action in illusory space becomes an illusory trace of action in real space." The organic form of the horse is barely recognizable, though the work retains a sense of movement—like a drapery study, or the twisted metal of a John Chamberlain crushed-car sculpture. And while Dean's previous objects have riffed on the blank forms of predecessors such as Robert Morris, *Friesian Mare* recasts the Minimalists' relational framework by introducing explicit content: "If you put a figure through this process instead of a cube," she asks, "does it elicit something more from the viewer?" Presenting us with the tangible impact of a simulation's destructive blows, Dean rewires the affective response that violence might otherwise elicit.

Flanking the sculpture on all sides is a series of wall works on aluminum panels, printed with emptied, atmospheric images of the sky in contrasting weather. The scenes originated as hand-painted backdrops for episodes of Looney Tunes, which Dean encountered online and digitally scrubbed of their characters, leaving only the space between and behind them. Non-images of a sort, these hazy skies bear visible traces of the many conversions they have undergone (scratches on the film's celluloid, pixelation). Dean thinks of each as an interchangeable backdrop against which the action in the gallery plays out; like stage flats that back the figures—the sculpture and its viewers—while they do what protagonists do. The skies also recall the mythos of the American West, with its wide-open spaces and endless vistas; yet each is loosed from the land with no horizon to ground it and fractured at the seams, the wooden struts holding the panels together left visibly exposed. That same sense of synthetic Americana extends to Dean's exhibition design: visitors must pass through a pair of saloon doors painted pink. The doors mark a threshold that is also a passage, though it's unclear where it leads—their doubled hinges swing open and closed in both directions, eroding the line between who is inside and who is out.

Material simulation by Harry Sanderson

Aria Dean (b. 1993) lives and works in New York. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions and performances include The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2023); CAPC Bordeaux (2023); REDCAT, Los Angeles (2021); Greene Naftali, New York (2021); Artists Space, New York (2020); Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva (2019); and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York (2018). Significant group shows include the Whitney Biennial: *Quiet as It's Kept* (2022); the Hammer Museum's biennial *Made in L.A. 2020: a version* (2021); Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2019); The MAC, Belfast, Northern Ireland (2019); Tai Kwun, Hong Kong (2019); Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2018); Swiss Institute, New York (2018); and the de Young Museum, San Francisco (2017), among others.

Her writing has appeared in publications including *Artforum*, *e-flux journal*, *Texte zur Kunst*, and *November*, of which she is a founding editor; a volume of her collected writings is forthcoming from Sternberg Press. Dean's work is in the collection of the De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg, Netherlands; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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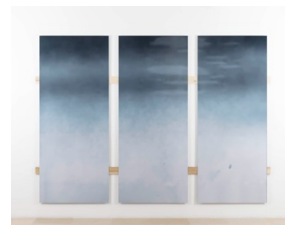
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Floor



Pink Saloon Doors, 2023
Painted maple, stainless steel hardware
38 x 54 1/2 x 1 3/8 inches (97 x 138 x 4 cm)



FIGURE A, Friesian Mare, 2023
Polyurethane foam, paint, wood
39 x 40 x 48 inches (99 x 102 x 122 cm)



GROUND Horizon, 2023
Dye sublimation on aluminum, wooden cleats
Three Panels: 96 x 44 1/5 x 2 inches (244 x 112 x 5 cm)
Overall Installation: 96 x 152 1/4 x 2 inches (244 x 387 x 5 cm)



GROUND Dog, 2023
Dye sublimation on aluminum, wooden cleats
Four Panels: 96 x 42 2/3 x 2 inches (244 x 108 x 5 cm)
Overall Installation: 96 x 192 1/2 x 2 inches (244 x 489 x 5 cm)



GROUND Two Seater, 2023
Dye sublimation on aluminum, wooden cleats
Three Panels: 96 x 43 9/10 x 2 inches (244 x 112 x 5 cm)
Overall Installation: 96 x 151 x 2 inches (244 x 384 x 5 cm)



GROUND Duck Test, 2023

Dye sublimation on aluminum, wooden cleats

Three Panels: 96 x 42 5/8 x 2 inches (244 x 108 x 5 cm)

Overall Installation: 96 x 150 1/4 x 2 inches (244 x 383 x 5 cm)