

The Drunken Boat

Paul Harris & Robert Kieswetter

June 23 - September 30, 2023

The Paul Harris + Marguerite Kirk Gallery
190 Skyway Blvd # 2, Belgrade, MT 59714

This exhibition, *The Drunken Boat*, pairs a Paul Harris sculpture and paintings by Robert Kieswetter. The title comes from the 1871 poem by Arthur Rimbaud of the same name. The poem's narrator, a ship set adrift, unmoored and unmanned, oscillates between bliss and torment on its voyage down river, to the sea. Over the course of 10 days, the ship experiences ecstatic freedom and bravado, futility and helplessness. Taking on water, the boat becomes drunken.

Paul Harris' sculpture, *Strait is the Gate* (1980) depicts a kneeling female figure, mid-gesture, turned away from a field in bloom. She gazes up wide-eyed, mouth agape, nearly grasping her chest, Black lines running from her chin-line down the collarbone draw a graphic bone structure. Her outward expression appears to convey a state of enlightenment, ecstasy, or fear.

Robert Kieswetter's grouping of abstract paintings are together titled *Loose Sluice*. Each individual painting began with the same mark-making gesture of an intersection. After the quick attempt to find a center, the works accumulate formal sediment, surfaces build, colors harmonize, and a language emerges. One line bisects another line, forming a grid. Installed together, a grid of grids forms a grate: simultaneously a fence and a filter.

A *strait* is a narrow body of water connecting two larger bodies of water: a geographic gatekeeper.

A *sluice* is a man-made channel whose flow is regulated by a gate. A loose sluice is a generous filter, letting through some gravel with the gold.

Through narrow straits, to oceanic depths, the drunken boat steers through freedom and confinement; rapture and wretchedness; hope and fear. What's left caught in the sluice?

Paul Harris (1925-2018, b. Orlando, FL, d. Bozeman, MT) was an American sculptor and lithographer. Harris studied under Hans Hofmann in 1949 and received an MFA from the University of New Mexico in 1950. His work has been exhibited at MoMA, SF MOMA, LACMA, and various museums and institutions in Europe and South America. He was a Fulbright professor in Chile, a MacDowell Colony resident, a Guggenheim recipient and a visiting artist at the Rinehardt School of Sculpture, Baltimore. He taught at New York University, University of California, Berkeley, and San Francisco Art Institute prior to becoming a faculty member at California College of Art 1968, where he taught until 1992. His home and studio were in Bolinas, California.

Robert Kieswetter (b. 1978 San Diego, CA) is a visual artist and musician. Kieswetter has performed at The Getty, Centre Pompidou, Nicodim Gallery, Rental Gallery and New Image Art. His work has been exhibited at Brackett Creek Exhibitions, MT and Brackett Creek Editions, NY. He lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.