



GEORGIE HILL
VENUS MARINA / THE ROSES CAME ROARING

SUMER, TĀMAKI MAKAURAU
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*It was the year he began to wonder about the noise that colors make. Roses came roaring across the garden at him.
He lay on his bed at night listening to the silver light of stars crashing against the window screen. Most
of those he interviewed for the science project had to admit they did not hear the cries of the roses
being burned alive in the noonday sun. Like horses, Geryon would say helpfully, like horses in war. No, they shook their heads.
Why is grass called blades? he asked them. Isn't it because of the clicking? ^[1]*

Sumer is pleased to present *Venus Marina / The Roses Came Roaring*, an exhibition of new paintings by Tāmaki Makaurau-based artist Georgie Hill.

Well known for her distinctive painting that bridges the atmospheric and psychedelic. Hill's work combines gestural mark making in paint with hard geometries of appliqué-like collage elements, and the artist's "carved" line work that excoriates and divides the work surface.^[2] The paintings image and collate an array of loosely repetitive abstract pattern-like forms, each of which flow, dance and radiate from centre to edge. Prismatic. Aura-like. Rendered in variegated palette—with colours ranging from soft pinks, blues and greys, to bright vermillion red, deep indigo blue, and lurid acid yellow—they recall optical phenomena and effects; as well as other things observable in nature, albeit things abstruse and otherworldly. The works strongly resemble both traditional fabric dyeing techniques such as Indian bandhani and East Asian shibori;^[3] as well as theosophically-inspired spiritualist, or mediumistic, works of early modernists (many of whom were women), as well as later works by artists most often associated with the feminist art movement.^[4]

This latest body of work represents a recent shift in the artist's practice. Whereas previously Hill has worked exclusively on paper, in watercolour and collage, here she exhibits larger works produced in acrylic on canvas as well. This shift to working across an expanded range of media also coincides with a "freeing up" in the artist's approach more broadly speaking; allowing, she explains, for her work to be more intuitively derived. And thus, her painting itself becomes more clearly gestural, amorphous, and abstract. Nevertheless, the artist continues to strictly adhere to a number of clear formal constraints. Rules by which all works across the series can be seen to conform; not only in terms of palette, form, and material treatment, but also with the use of compositional structures. The most notable of these structures being Hill's collage: wherein two rectangular panels of roughly cut canvas are superimposed upon a stretched canvas. Positioned horizontally, they obscuring most of the canvas beneath. The two panels do not touch, yet they still divide the canvases in half—effectively creating two hemispheres: land and sky, sea and sky, two halves of a clam shell, or the upper and lower eyelid.

Something that is perhaps curious about Hill's work is that while the works themselves adhere to the iterative process-based approach, which one tends to associate with abstract art, the non-objective, they are seldom, if ever, discussed in such terms. Previous writers have most often elected to interpret Hill's work as wholly allegorical. And certainly this is



something which the artist herself invites. An avid reader of modern literature, particularly the writing of women, the titles for her works are largely borrowed from texts that resonate with her. In particular she appreciates writing which focuses on descriptions of acute realities; wherein perception is heightened, accentuated, and at times, verges on the inexplicable, and possibly even the sublime.

The artist speaks of chromesthesia (sound-to-colour synaesthesia), and accounts of cataclysmic events: volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and floods. The show's title makes two such references: *Venus Marina*—the goddess borne of the sea, protectress of seafarers; and also in reference to the fresco of the House of Venus in the Shell, Pompeii—where she was considered a protectress of their city (as well as the erotic sphere); and *The Roses Came Roaring*—a line from Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* (1998), which describes the synaesthetic reality of its protagonist, Geryon. Himself a minor character from Greek mythology, here Geryon is transposed into the modern world; from monster to moody queer teenager, navigating the difficulties of sex, love and identity. Incidentally, it is also a story where two of the main characters travel the world making field recordings upon active volcanos.

Hill explains that her work is informed by thinking around goddess imagery within mythology: “the stories—the feminine archetypes—the apocalyptic event—a civilisation beneath lava and ash.” She goes on to state that for her the process of collage is significant, inasmuch that she considers it to be as analogous to “excavating the remains and fragments, [in order] to piece together a picture of time and place,” that “making paintings is like an excavation of memories, thoughts, emotions and bringing together fragments to build or balance, solve or make sense. A way for me to process and make sense of life, my experiences.”

Georgie Hill (b. 1979, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand) lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau. She has exhibited extensively with solo and group presentations at many of the country's top galleries and museums. She has been the recipient of several awards and residencies including the Olivia Spencer Bower Foundation Art Award, the C Art Trust Award and the Youkobo Art Space residency in Tokyo. Her work is held in the collections of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, the University of Auckland, The Chartwell Collection, and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Key exhibitions include: *Feint* at City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi/ Gus Fisher Gallery, 2014 and the Beijing Contemporary Art Fair, 2019.

[1] A. Carson, *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1998, p. 85.

[2] A novel technique of Hill's, whereby she scores and incises the paper to create raised lines, of which she will often later fill with colour.

[3] Fabrics that are more broadly referred to as tie-dye. These eastern fabrics were popularised in the west during the 1960s and 1970s, becoming synonymous with the counterculture and New Age movements.

[4] I.e. Most notably, the work of Georgiana Houghton, Hilma af Klint, and Wassily Kandinsky; as well as later works by Georgia O'Keeffe, Judy Chicago, and Sylvia Fein.

[5] Unpublished correspondence with the artist.