



Paula Santomé, The Blue Phase (detail), 2023.

Press Release

Paula Santomé

The felling of Daphne

18 November 2023 - 11 February 2024

Preview: Friday 17 November, 6-8pm CET

VITRINE, Basel. Daily 24/7.

VITRINE is delighted to announce the solo exhibition of emerging Basel-based Spanish artist Paula Santomé at VITRINE Basel.

Santomé works across sculpture, reliefs and drawing to explore youth culture through the lens of feminism and fringe models of resistance. She is interested in seeing what happens when people break free of dominant roles and forms of thinking to free inhibitions. This is contextualised through the artist's personal experiences growing up as a woman in today's society.

For "The felling of Daphne", Santomé has created a series of new works that depicts contemporary reinterpretations of religious and mythological figures and stories inspired by the representation of women in the Western canon of the second half of the 19th century. This is a period in which Santomé describes a dominant male reaction to the early women's suffrage movements and the first feminist wave, which she explores through contemporary scenes that are represented in hand-embossed aluminium reliefs. Inspired by pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist paintings that project a patriarchal view of evil creation through the female icon, Santomé incorporates and manipulates a new set of gestures. She adds layers of meaning and symbolism that challenge and reshape the narrative surrounding these figures, with the ultimate goal of encouraging a broader dialogue about the evolving roles and representation of women in today's society.

'Spes tva, carceris mei' (2023) depicts two women, one spitting into a box and another crouched down to touch a snake. The work is inspired by paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John William Waterhouse of the infamous story of Pandora's box. The myth tells of a box given to Prometheus' brother Epimetheus from the Gods for stealing fire from heaven which Pandora opens and releases sickness, death and suffering into the world.

A further work in this new series shows a fist with its thumb between its fingers and leaves branching from its forearm. Drawn from the tale of Daphne and Apollo, a story in which Apollo falls in love with a Daphne who is sworn to chastity. Apollo refuses to accept this so hunts her, but when he catches her she turns into a tree, sacrificing her body to avoid his sexual advances. In the work is a pre-Romantic, pagan symbol of the Iberian peninsula known as "La Higa", an amulet against the evil eye and a symbol of protection.

Santomé reappropriates the female icons of mythology that convey male centric stories and polarises these figures to become objects of resistance and feminine power. By re-imagining them in a modern light, Santomé raises questions about the extent to which the perception of women has evolved and whether these updated representations are no longer perceived as symbolic acts of violence against women, but as a liberation and a new interpretation of the female body.

Shown alongside the reliefs are a series of metal casts from her 'Toe to Toe' series which are intended as handheld objects for women to provide self protection; a deterrent of maliciousness to empower the holder and a tool towards emancipation. Within both bodies of work, the artist prompts a critical examination of how society perceives young, liberated women in the contemporary environment.

Paula Santomé (b. Spain, 1994) lives and works in Basel, CH. She holds a BA in Fine Art from Pontevedra, University of Vigo, ES (2018) and a Masters in Fine Art from Institut Kunst, HGK FHNW, Basel, CH (2022). Awards include: Finalist, Kiefer Hablitzel Göhner Kunstpreis, CH (2023) and First Prize, Contemporary Art Award of the Instituto Dental Campos, Vigo, ES (2018).

She has exhibitions internationally at galleries and institutions including: Kunsthalle Palazzo, Liestal, CH; Kunsthalle Basel, CH; Kunsthau Baselland, Basel, CH; Museum of Pontevedra, ES; MAC Museum of Contemporary Art, A Coruña, ES; Kiefer Hablitzel Stiftung, CH; Basel Social Club 2023, CH; Palazzina, Allschwil, CH; Giulietta, Basel, CH; Oreilles Internationales, Basel, CH; Kaiserwache, Freiburg, DE; Pilz Welle Lust, Basel, CH; Atelierhaus Klingental, Basel, CH; ESDIR, La Rioja, ES; Casa Decor, Madrid, ES; Greylight Projects, Brussels, BE.

Residencies include GGG Atelierhaus, Basel, CH (2024) and the International Summer Academy of Salzburg, AT (2021).

Forthcoming exhibitions include 'Concerto Finale' at Regionale 24, Kunsthau Baselland, Basel, CH, and 'Touch and Fire' at Regionale 24, Kunst Raum Riehen, CH, and a group show (curated by Chus Martinez) at Galeria Belmonte, Barcelona, ES.

For press enquiries, image requests, and private view accreditation please contact: press@vitrinegallery.com

Notes to Editor

1. Installation views of the show will be released on Thursday 16 November 2023.
2. VITRINE is focused on artistic experimentation and emerging interdisciplinary practices. The gallery was founded in Bermondsey, London in 2010, with a second space in Basel opened in 2016, a digital space launched in 2020 and a third space in London's Fitzrovia opened in Spring 2022. Over this decade, we have established a reputation as a selector and nurturer of new talent and our continued aim is to support artists' careers and the growth of their ideas.

Our programme is focused on interdisciplinary approaches in a variety of media, concentrating on artists working in installation, sculpture and performance. We are committed to support experimental practices that flourish site-responsively, in alternative environments to the traditional white cube, and are often underrepresented in the art market.

Our spaces are transparent: In Bermondsey, glass windows cover the entire 16-metre-long, panoramic space; In Basel, our space – custom designed by Swiss architects PanteraPantera - offers a 360 degree 'in-the-round' viewing experience. This transparent architecture allows all exhibitions to be viewable 24/7 from the surrounding public squares. Our Fitzrovia space is a more conventional gallery space. Glass remains a defining feature of the architecture, with windows flanking around floor exhibition space. All our spaces are wheelchair accessible. We further our programme through international satellite exhibitions, gallery collaborations and art fairs.

Our business model is a hybrid. We operate an expanding commercial gallery; representing a core group of artists and advising international clients. Our work in the public realm and commitment to supporting artists with ambitious experimental exhibitions has allowed us access to public funding, which we have carefully used over our 10-year history for specific large-scale non-profit projects.