

Carly Burnell

but the song persists

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David Lewis

111 Reade Street, Floor #3

New York NY 10013

The story ends at
impact but the song persists
I don't see anything,
you aren't looking.

As it persists
tragedy lights the way in
dying once a day.

- Carly Burnell, 2024

Carly Burnell traces her roots as a granddaughter of the Southern California light and space movement. Her works, first incubated by natural light, find their ultimate meaning in the viewer's perception of their visual plane. Her practice is informed by a tradition and spirit of transcendentalism – Burnell's paintings are simultaneously individualistic and infinite. The paintings follow a strand of the expansive Zen Buddhist subject/object duality. There is no object and therefore no subject. There is just seeing. There is no painting, but instead something disguised as a painting. At one distance what you think you are seeing hovers as a mirage of what we think we understand to be a painting; you move in closer and you're a thousand miles above the surface of the plutonian body, you move out farther and you're just experiencing a photopsia.

When spending time with Burnell's paintings, one may exercise a muscle that has perhaps lain dormant within us for too long now – whether a literal interpretation of muscle through the use of our optic nerve adjusting to the subtle ways in which Burnell employs her oil paint with wax, silicone, and resin; or a metaphorical, psychic muscle, one reaching for the language required to give form to an intrinsic feeling that the paintings stir within us.

The word muscle is used loosely as there is no real flexing required in the act of looking at Burnell's paintings, the exertion comes with doing rather the opposite: you simply *must* do nothing as the paintings wash over you. And perhaps listen to them as you move in closer, out farther, from side to side, back and forth. There is a whisper at times, something uncanny that you can't quite place your finger on – is the painting bruised?

The paintings on view in *but the song persists* occupy these incorporeal spaces with a subtle certainty. The mezzo-piano self-assuredness of *reykjavik* (2021) finds its equal and opposite force reflected back in *stomped* (2024), whose confident frenetic brushwork evokes a mezzo-forte energy; creating a bright tension, in the vibration of which the paintings find their balance. *precursory signs* (2024) joins the song with its baritone cadenza.

beneath the eye (2024) appears anthropomorphous in its physicality however behaves almost like a punctuation mark, giving either pause or emphasis, one cannot fully say as it depends on where in the sky the sun is, to the lilting phrase it forms with its companion *the eye* (2022).

The sun then shifts further West a degree and you're no longer with the same painting you thought you were with; you're faced with an enigma. Perhaps you feel a pang of precariousness at first, it's not as you thought, but you let your eyes adjust and soon enough you think you see clearly once more, the bruise was just a stain after all. The sun then shifts further West another degree.

Carly Burnell (b. 1991) is a painter from Santa Barbara, CA, currently living and working in New York. Burnell completed her BFA in Fine Arts at Parsons The New School of Design in 2015 and received her Masters in Studio Art from New York University in 2017. Most recently Burnell had a solo exhibition at Mariposa, Paris in January 2024. In 2019, and in 2023, she had solo exhibitions at Spencer Brownstone Gallery, New York. Burnell's work has been included in group exhibitions in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Nashville, and Paris. Burnell was featured on David Zwirner's Platform in 2021. Burnell is also a writer and performs with Stanley Love Performance Group.