

Louise Giovanelli

A Song of Ascents

28. 6. – 28. 9. 2025

Press talk: 27. 6. 2025, 11 am

Opening: 27. 6. 2025, 6 pm

HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark

Cooperation:

The Hepworth Wakefield (Yorkshire)

Museum Villa Stuck (Munich)

Catalog

Artist Talk:

28. 6. 2025, 11 am

Curators:

Marie-Charlotte Carrier, Sandro Droschl

Louise Giovanelli paints striking hypnotic works that emit light both on a visual and metaphorical level. Her works often show mysterious objects, such as a closed curtain, a glimmering shock of hair, or the reflecting surface of a cocktail glass. There are also human figures, often women, seemingly caught in moments between awe and desperation, or about to cross over a border of experience and knowledge. Their motives are held deliberately unclear, and are presented together with the analogue blurring of a memory or a half-forgotten dream.

The title *A Song of Ascents* is taken from a series of religious psalms that were traditionally recited by pilgrims on their travels to holy sites. For Giovanelli, the idea of an “ascent” reflects our human longing to attain higher states of consciousness, whether through spiritual devotion, sensuality and love, states of intoxication, the thrill of performance, or just horror. This journey to the transcendence of consciousness unfolds in her paintings as an uncanny melding of emotions in which exaggerated expression, richly layered textures, and intensive color-rich images engender both ecstasy and discomfort.

Alongside existing works, this exhibition presents nine new paintings produced especially for the occasion. Many of the works are inspired by scenes from films, while some of the more recent paintings were made on the basis of photographs that the artist took in working-class clubs and theaters in England. These places, which are often characterized by modest stages, worn velvet curtains, and a strange mix of everyday lightness and staged theatrics, are transformed by the artist into venues of shared performance and hedonistic escapism. Giovanelli emphasizes elements like the lavish curtains succumbing to the force of gravity, shimmering textiles with sequins, and focused spotlighting, in order to raise these familiar spaces to something extraordinary and to give them a sense of select value and of an almost religious cult, such as is often accorded to music and its holy places by its fans. Certain details are particularly emphasized and play a key role, as if the artist is zooming in on her pictures in order to consider a curl of hair, a piece of furniture, or accessories in their formal and narrative features. This detailed focus on ephemeral elements alternating with the hyper-realist and fantastic depiction of the whole is a key characteristic of Giovanelli’s work that takes her to the limits of what can be done in painting.

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She creates her resplendent works using the classical techniques of painting, applying thin layers of highly pigmented oil paint and thereby achieving very varied and almost sculptural results. Giovanelli's paintings invite us to cross a threshold where reality and fantasy meet, in a space laden with ambiguity and in which each scene oscillates between the outstanding and the uncanny.

A Song of Ascents is presented in cooperation between The Hepworth Wakefield (Yorkshire), Museum Villa Stuck (Munich) and HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an 80-page English-language publication of the same title, edited by The Hepworth Wakefield, and available via HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark as project partner. It will include a text by Phoebe Cripps, a conversation with Louise Giovanelli and Marie-Charlotte Carrier, a pop quiz by Charlie Fox, and poems by Helenskià Collett, with reproductions and illustrations of all the works shown in the exhibition.

Louise Giovanelli (*1993 London, lives in Manchester)

Solo exhibitions (selection): GRIMM 54, New York (2025), He Art Museum, Fohan (2024), White Cube, Hong Kong (2024), Moon Grove, Manchester (2023), GRIMM, New York (2023, 2021, 2020), White Cube, London (2022), Frutta Gallery, Manchester (2019), Workplace Foundation, Gateshead (2019), Warrington Museum and Art Gallery, Warrington (2019).

Group exhibitions (selection): Green Family Art Hastings Contemporary, Hastings (2024), FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2023), White Cube, Seoul (2023), Kasmin, New York (2022), Green Family Foundation, Dallas (2022), AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (2021), Marlborough, London (2021), Hayward Gallery, London (2021), C.L.E.A.R.I.N.G., New York (2020), Air de Paris, Romainville (2020), Frutta Gallery, Rome (2019), The Art House, Worcester (2019), Arcade Gallery, London (2019).

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