Press Release

Christina Quarles. The Ground Glows Black

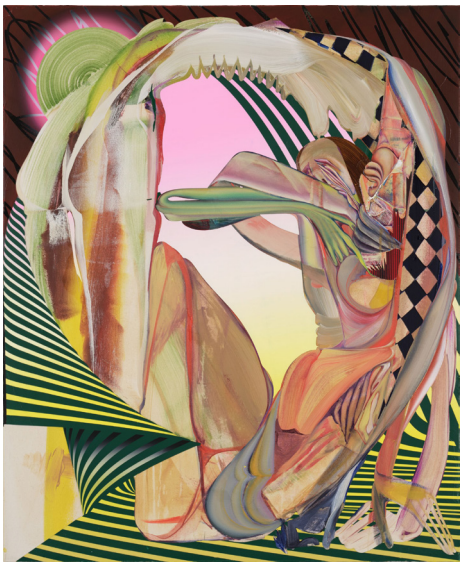
24 February – 3 May 2026
Hauser & Wirth Downtown Los Angeles
South Gallery

Los Angeles... Christina Quarles' latest body of work reflects the acute sense of displacement she experienced in the wake of the historic Los Angeles wildfires that consumed her home in early 2025. Quarles is already admired internationally for the dexterity and assertiveness with which she manipulates paint. With the new works on view in 'The Ground Glows Black,' she pushes that expressive and physical power to new limits, conveying the impact of the fires on her inner landscape.

Kinetic planes of color, texture and pattern evoke architectural and digital realms where human forms jolt and bend in response to unseen forces. Denser and more frenetic than Quarles' earlier works, these paintings feel newly urgent while hewing to the artist's core pursuit: to show how instability and resilience coexist, creating spaces where multiple realities can overlap.

Quarles approaches each canvas with no predetermined composition, beginning with improvisatory marks that evolve into fluid lines resembling human forms. By working in acrylic paint, she maintains the immediacy of drawing, building up layers and textures while suspending moments in time. Midway through a painting, Quarles shifts to a systematic stenciling process. She photographs the work and uses Adobe Illustrator to view her initial marks against various backdrops. The patterns and planes she creates digitally are printed on a vinyl plotter and used in a multi-layered masking process. This back-and-forth relationship between the computer and the canvas lays the groundwork for seemingly impossible scenarios.

Quarles plays with interiority and exteriority throughout the exhibition, folding domestic and cosmic spaces into one another and allowing daylight and moonlight to coexist within a single frame. By refusing any one definitive narrative or perspective, her paintings generate a preternatural simultaneity—one that evokes the disorientation



of trauma and transition. This sense of instability is exemplified in 'Glow, After' (2026), the artist's largest stretched painting to date, comprising two modular panels whose components are devised to rotate. Over the course of the exhibition, a series of reconfigurations will invite ongoing reinterpretation.

The exhibition will also debut a new series of five charcoal works on paper. Unlike acrylic paint, charcoal imposes tighter constraints. These new works are made through erasure rather than addition: forms emerge as the material is removed, with sections of paper carefully cut away and surfaces peeled back using an X-Acto knife. Because stenciling is so central to her practice—creating order through sharp edges and layered forms—Quarles developed a way to invert that process in charcoal.

The gallery windows have been covered in white film to heighten the contrast of exterior shadows, echoing the black-and-white gradients of drawings and the black pigment that has been sprayed onto the surface of the South Gallery columns—a reference to the blackened trees of Quarles' former neighborhood. Like ash building up on a surface, the columns bear cumulative residue: layers of pigment that reveal imperfections and texture. Just as foreground and background oscillate within her canvases, so does the relationship between her work and the surrounding architecture.

As Quarles notes: 'We aren't fixed beings; we adapt to and are shaped by the environments and social structures we're part of.' In 'The Ground Glows Black,' this idea plays out as an ongoing exchange between the body, the built environment and our simultaneous, subjective realities—a nexus where meaning emerges from context, movement and change rather than from a single, fixed position.

About the Artist

Christina Quarles (b. 1985) is a Los Angeles-based artist, whose practice works to dismantle assumptions and ingrained beliefs surrounding identity and the human figure. Born in Chicago and raised by her mother in Los Angeles, Quarles took art classes from an early age. She developed a solid foundation for a lifelong drawing practice through after-school programs and figure drawing classes at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts.

In 2007, Quarles graduated from Hampshire College with dual BA degrees in Philosophy and Studio Art, then trained and worked in the field of graphic design. As her immersion in the visual arts progressed, she became well versed in and influenced by Marlene Dumas, Leonora Carrington, Jack Whitten, David Hockney and Philip Guston. Seeking a vehicle for expressing the feelings and experiences language alone cannot articulate, Quarles went on to attend Yale University, where she received her MFA in 2016. She participated in an intensive artist residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture that same year.

Quarles has been the recipient of several awards and grants. She was the inaugural recipient of the Pérez Art Museum Miami Prize in 2019; received the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant and participated in the Fountainhead Residency in 2017; and she received the Robert Schoelkopf Fellowship at Yale University in 2015. Most recently, Quarles has had solo exhibitions at the Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker, Norway (2025); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah GA (2025); Gammel Strand, Copenhagen, Denmark (2024) and Hamburger Banhof–Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany (2023). In 2022, Quarles' work was featured in 'The Milk of Dreams,' the 59th International Art Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Cecilia Alemani and in 'manifesto of fragility,' the main exhibition of the 16th Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art, curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath.

Learning

Alongside the exhibition, Christina Quarles will contribute to a comprehensive learning program developed in conjunction with local collaborators from LA County High School for the Arts, Inner-City Arts and GoStars. The program includes a 'Getting to Know' film, part of a series that explores the work and careers of the foremost artists of our time through the lens of creative students and community members. For more information, please visit hauserwirth.com/learning.

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm

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Caption and courtesy information:

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Tomb (Is My World Not Fallin' Down?)
2025
Acrylic on canvas
177.8 x 330.2 cm / 70 x 130 in

Is This The Return to Oz?
2025
Acrylic on canvas
127 x 101.6 cm / 50 x 40 in

Fuck This Muck (Yer Bringin' Me Down)
2025
Acrylic on canvas
195.6 x 243.8 cm / 77 x 96 in