

SARAH FAUX

Press Pack

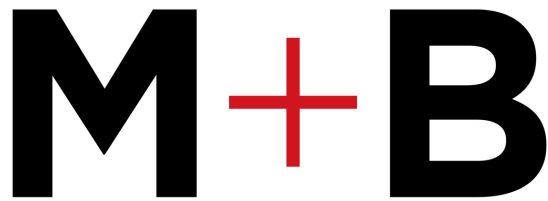


## SARAH FAUX

Shifting images move within Sarah Faux's paintings like faces appear momentarily in drifting clouds. Within these sensual, gestural paintings, viewers slowly decode figures coupling and uncoupling, constructing and deconstructing themselves. In Faux's erotic world, power dynamics shift as fluidly as gender blurs. She crops her subjects to focus on specific body parts, a compositional strategy that pulls the audience into an intimate, first-person perspective. As Faux paints with colorful lines, pours, and scrapes, the boundaries of these bodies are never fixed, receding back into abstraction as quickly as they appear.



**Sarah Faux** (b. 1986, Boston, MA) received her MFA in Painting from Yale University in 2015 and a joint BA/BFA from Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design in 2009. She has held solo exhibitions at M+B (Los Angeles), Capsule Shanghai (Shanghai, China), and Stems Gallery (Brussels, Belgium), among others. Faux's work has been exhibited in group shows nationally and internationally, including at Loyal Gallery (Stockholm), Fredericks & Freiser (New York, NY), and How Art Museum (Shanghai, China). Faux was awarded the prestigious Gloucester Painting Prize and Residency at Yale, and she has participated in other residencies including Yaddo (Saratoga Springs, New York), Cuevas Tilleard Projects (Lamu, Kenya) and the Lower East Side Printshop (New York, NY). Her paintings have been written about in *Cultured Magazine*, *i-D Vice*, *Surface Magazine*, *Modern Painters*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Interview Magazine*, *Hyperallergic* and *Artsy*, among others. Sarah Faux lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.



## SARAH FAUX

**BORN** 1986, Boston, MA  
Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

### EDUCATION

2015 Yale University, MFA Painting and Printmaking  
2009 Rhode Island School of Design, BFA Painting, *Honors*  
2008 Brown University, BA History of Art and Architecture, *Phi Beta Kappa*

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 *Whatever I see I swallow*, M+B, Los Angeles, CA  
2020 *Perfect for Her*, Capsule, Shanghai, China  
2019 *Clench and Release*, Sarah Faux, M+B, Los Angeles, CA  
2018 *Pucker*, Capsule, Shanghai, China  
*11am Mirror Hole*, Cuevas Tilleard, New York, NY  
2017 *Seether*, Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New York, NY  
2016 *Gemini*, Stems Gallery, Brussels, Belgium

### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

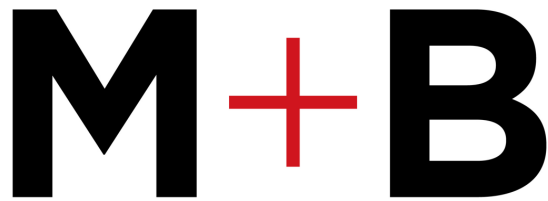
2020 *Show Me the Signs*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, CA  
*100!*, Loyal Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden  
*OrtaMiklos: 6 acts of confinement*, Friedman Benda, New York, NY  
*Body in Motion, Traveling Bodies*, Stems Gallery, Brussel Belgium  
*A Room of Her Own*, How Museum, Shanghai, China  
2019 *A Seed's a Star*, curated by Constance Tenvik, Loyal Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden  
*Pleasure in Precariousness*, Thomas Erben Gallery, New York, NY  
*Attached*, New York Studio School, New York, NY  
*Bed*, curated by David Humphrey and Kate Javens, Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA

# M+B

*Awaken*, curated by Eileen Jeng Lynch, Lower East Side Printshop, New York, NY  
*mushrooms*, Y2K group off-site, New York, NY

- 2018 *The Divine Joke*, curated by Barry Schwabsky, Anita Rogers Gallery, New York, NY  
*Outside In*, Francesco Pantaleone Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy  
*#FFFFFFiguration*, curated by Jonathan Chapline, Nevven Gallery, Gothenberg, Sweden  
*I am no bird*, ltd los angeles, Los Angeles, CA
- 2017 *Slip*, three-person exhibition with Tschabala Self & Marcela Florido, Stems Gallery, Brussels, Belgium  
*Close Quarters*, 1969 Gallery, New York, NY  
*Small Painting*, COUNTY, Palm Beach, FL
- 2016 *forward*, ltd los angeles, Los Angeles, CA  
*Touching in the Dark*, two-person exhibition with Mandy Lynn Ford, yours, mine & ours gallery, New York, NY  
*When we become us*, Capsule Shanghai, Shanghai, China  
*Scale a Wall*, curated by Town Hall Meeting, Cuevas Tilleard, New York, NY  
*Four Artists*, Fredericks & Freiser Gallery, New York, NY  
*WACKing the Piñata*, ltd los angeles, Los Angeles, CA  
*Beyond the Gaze*, Garis & Hahn Gallery, New York, NY  
*Young Frankensteins*, Lesley Heller Workspace, New York, NY
- 2015 *Receptive Fields*, Edward Thorp Gallery, New York, NY  
*Artemisia*, Cuevas Tilleard, New York, NY  
*Elaine!*, Wanusay, Montreal, Canada  
*Yale MFA Painting & Printmaking*, curated by David Humphrey, Garis & Hahn Gallery, New York, NY  
*The Ramble*, The Range, Saguache, CO  
*Richard Said*, Fjord, Philadelphia, PA  
*Take it Easy*, Dubrovnik Contemporary, Dubrovnik, Croatia  
*2015 but who's counting: MFA Thesis*, Green Hall, Yale University, New Haven, CT
- 2014 *Junction*, Edward Thorp Gallery, New York, NY  
*Boston Young Contemporaries*, 808 Commonwealth Gallery, Boston, MA  
*I'll Miss Your Garbage*, Molasses Books, Brooklyn, NY  
*About the Body*, Gallery 1989, Larchmont, NY  
*Shelter*, with Chuck Webster, Giampietro Gallery, New Haven, CT
- 2013 *Sense-Data*, curated by RK Projects, Shoot the Lobster, New York, NY  
*Splendor in the Grass*, Green Hall, Yale University, New Haven, CT  
*Dying on Stage: New Painting in New York*, curated by Kyle Chayka, Garis and Hahn Gallery, New York, NY  
*Slippery Slope*, Woman Made Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2012 *Streamlines*, KANSAS, New York, NY





*Brucennial 2012, Bruce High Quality Foundation, New York, NY*

2011 *DANK, Tompkins Projects, Brooklyn, NY*

## **RESIDENCIES AND AWARDS**

2020 The Swatch Art Peace Hotel Artist-in-Residence, Shanghai, China

2018/19 Lower East Side Printshop Keyholder Residency, New York, NY

2017 Cuevas Tilleard Projects Residency, Lamu, Kenya  
Yaddo Artist's Residency, Saratoga Springs, NY

2014 Gloucester Painting Prize and Residency, Yale School of Art, Gloucester, MA

2012 Yaddo Artist's Residency, Saratoga Springs, NY

2009 Woodstock-Byrdcliffe Guild Artist-In-Residence, Woodstock, NY

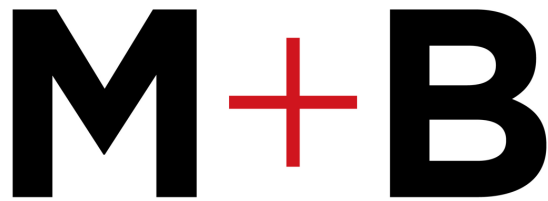
2008 Ox-bow School of Art Fellowship, Saugatuck, MI

## **SELECTED PRESS**

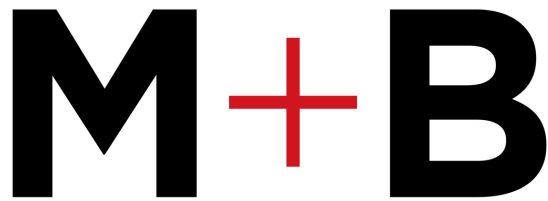
2021 "Sarah Faux: Reconstructing Feminine Bodies with Internal Logic", *Artshard*, January 2

2020 Bailey, Stephanie. "Artissima XYZ: Artist Highlights", *Ocula*, Nov. 11  
Moldan, Tess. "Shanghai Art Week: Exhibitions to See", *Ocula*, November 10  
Muscatelli, Elisa. "Interview to The Artist Sarah Faux". *TB Educational*. November 4.  
"99 Words with Sarah Faux", *The Blank Newsletter*, October  
"Interview: Sarah Faux", *31 Women*, September 2

2019 Kissick, Dean. "30 Under 35 2020: Sarah Faux Plays with Perception," *Cultured Magazine*, Winter Issue  
Schwabsky, Barry. "Sarah Faux Paints Naked Sensations", *Cultured Magazine*, April  
Moroz, Sarah. "frieze new york is back: here are the artists you don't want to miss", *i-D Vice*, May 7  
Chayka, Kyle. "At Art Fairs, the Chairs Are Just as Considered as the Art", *The Wall Street Journal*, May 7  
Irish, Anni. "Must-See Booths at Frieze New York", *Blouin Artinfo*, May 4  
Cohen, Alina. "The 10 Best Booths at Frieze New York", *Artsy*, May 2  
Rees, Lucy. "9 Standout Artists to See at Frieze New York 2019", *Galerie*, May 2  
Feaster, Felicia. "Two New York artists tackle the idea of 'Bed'", *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, May 2



- Loos, Ted. "Frieze New York Addresses the Heat and Expands the Kitchen", *The New York Times*, May 1  
Pitcher, Laura. "8 things to look forward to at frieze's eighth edition", *i-D Vice*, April 29  
"Preview Peek: 9 Emerging Artists with Solo Booths at Frieze New York", *Artspace*, April 25  
Rawlings, Noah, "Pillow Talk: Bed at Marcia Wood Gallery", *Burnaway*, April 23  
Sutnick, Simone. "Sarah Faux's Cultured Commission Leaves a Lasting Impression", *Cultured Magazine*, April 16
- 2018 "On Bodies, Touch and Meditation: Martha Tuttle and Sarah Faux", *Art of Conversation*, October  
Fan, Stephanie. "Cheng Xinyi, Hu Zi, Sarah Faux", *Artsy Asia*, July 23  
"Barry Schwabsky and The Divine Joke", *Two Coats of Paint*, May 16  
Sisto, Elena. "Sex and Play and Painting: Sarah Faux in conversation with Elena Sisto", *Artcritical*, Feb. 22  
Avner, Janna. "ltd los angeles: I am no Bird...", *Artillery Magazine*, Jan. 23
- 2017 Forbes, Alexander. "West Bund's Boutique Format Delivers Multi-Million Dollar Sales from Chinese Mega Collectors", *Artsy*, Nov. 10  
*The Pinch*, The University of Memphis, Volume 37, Issue 2, Fall 2017  
Chun, Julie. "When We Become Us", *ArtReview Asia*, Spring 2017
- 2016 Woody, Michael. "This is The Cake", *Wallscrawler*, Dec. 11  
Gu, Qianfan, "When We Become Us", *Flash Art*, Nov. 24  
"WACKing the Piñata' at ltd los angeles", *Contemporary Art Daily*, Aug. 12  
Noice, E.D. "wacking the piñata at ltd los angeles reviewed", *aqnb*, Aug. 9  
Simmons, William. "10 Picks From NADA New York 2016", *Interview Magazine*, May 6  
Gottschalk, Molly. "The 12 Young Painters You Need to Know at NADA New York", *Artsy*, May 6  
Sutton, Benjamin. "NADA New York Gets Nasty", *Hyperallergic*, May 6  
"Nada conquierent New York", *La Libre*, April 29  
Chapline, Jonathan. "Sarah Faux – Ridgewood", *##### Walls*, April 28  
Wagner, A. "Four Female Artists vs. the Male Gaze at Garis & Hahn in New York", *Artsy*, April 13  
Fuller, Gabriela. "Up and Coming, Sarah Faux", *Surface Magazine*, March
- 2015 Plagens, Peter. "Yale, RISD MFAs go on Display", *The Wall Street Journal*, July 17  
Company, Issue #4, May  
*New American Paintings*, MFA Annual #117, April/ May  
Rutherford, Michael. "Sarah Faux", *Painter's Bread*, February 15
- 2014 Britton, Lauren. Artist Interview, Field Projects  
Butler, Sharon. "SURVEY: Bleaching, staining, and dyeing", *Two Coats of Paint*, Jan. 22
- 2013 Hanson, Sarah P. "Dying on Stage: New Painting in New York", *Modern Painters*, October



Micchelli, Thomas. "The New Casualists Strike Again", *Hyperallergic*,  
June 29

2011 Butler, Sharon. "Good Painting- Tatiana Berg and Sarah Faux," *Two Coats of Paint*,  
October 16  
*Gorky's Granddaughter*, Artist Interview, June

## PUBLICATIONS

2020 *Jealous of Oysters*, sketchbook zine, published through Capsule Shanghai, Shanghai, China

2018 *VORE*, zine collaboration with Johanna Povirk-Znoy, published through Capsule, Shanghai, China

2015 *Take me down*, zine published through Sheer Wonder Press, Scotland

## ARTIST LECTURES

2019 DePauw University, Greencastle, IN

2018 "Canvas as a body: Sarah Faux and Deng Tianyuan on the History of Painterly Painting", Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China

2017 Kossak Painting Program, Hunter College, New York, NY  
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

2016 Shanghai American Center, Shanghai, China  
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

2015 Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA

2013 Providence College, Providence, RI

# M+B

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## SARAH FAUX *Whatever I see I swallow*

June 4 – July 10, 2021

### Opening Reception

Friday, June 4, 2021 from 6 to 8 pm  
612 N Almont Drive, Los Angeles

**M+B** is pleased to present *Whatever I see I swallow*, an exhibition of new paintings by Sarah Faux. The artist's second solo show with the gallery runs from June 4 through July 10, 2021 with an opening reception on Friday, June 4 from 6 to 8 pm at our Almont location.

Sarah Faux makes sexy paintings, which are often also about sex. It is important to hold these two apart. If sex is about power and therefore knowledge, sexiness, a quality, can be laid libidinally on anything from bodies to t-shirts to whispers, converting the banal to the sensual. In Faux's hands, paint performs this translation, lending its tactile properties to the bodies and interiors she represents, and vice versa.

Paint spills out of drawn boundaries wetly, nods toward the effect of shadow on a thigh before curving around it, gets knotted in sheets and body hair. One gets the sense that gestures aren't too concerned with obeying the architecture of form and composition, preferring to slip, caress, and grab. Color gets smushed, like flesh on itself. Faux drags and scrapes at paint, visualizing motion as she simulates it. Everything has its own temperature: flushed knees, cold hands, humid gazes, the sweat of bodies and air. More than one viewer has commented that these unruly effects of paint lead them astray from the figures, allowing for pleasure in abstraction and the spectacle of materiality and touch. Sexy.

Remembering the figures complicates the paintings. Sex itself can be complicated, whether with a partner or alone. Locating an eye or hand can help an image click into place, usually not all at once but in slow blocks. A peering, green-gold face in *Buttercup* defines the thigh next to its hidden mouth by proximity. This leg then reveals itself and the figure it belongs to, unfolding the body from hip to belly, camisole, chest, and, off-frame, the gaze from which the scene unfolds. Each of these parts is made differently with particular coloration, reflecting light and the way that phenomenologically intense moments can fragment a body into its experiences, as though pleasure remakes the body upon receipt. In *Stained Glass Pit Stain*, a similar eye peeks out from under a bent arm, but which limb or ass belongs to whom is anyone's guess.

This is always a good question, in sex; who are we and what are our bodies? Does pleasure even belong to a self; or does it just pass through us? There are more insidious questions within these, about the objectification of people and desire, of gender and subjectivity, which Faux has visually hinted at for years by using the feminist trope of replacing linear perspective with point-of-view, locating the image as a product of (often femme) embodied vision. In many of the paintings in this show, Faux pushes this idea further by depicting both a figure pleasuring themselves and their reflection. Faux never paints a mirror as such but rather doubles the body as it would appear in one. The cacophony of limbs and colors in paintings like *Now I Am A Lake* and *Am Not, Are Too* get organized through the echoing forms of pulled-down panties and grasped genitals. Hands are joined by dildos which penetrate in some paintings and ejaculate in others. In a few, mid-sized paintings, the dildo is replaced by a hammer, handled in *There There*, and nestled in some cleft in *This Little Tribute*. The immediate reference to selfies is funny and an apt nod to desire as vernacular communication.

# M+B

Unlike a selfie meant to be sent, however, Faux's mirrored paintings are self-contained. Nowhere is this clearer than in *Whatever I see I swallow*, the painting which titles this exhibition, where doubled, spread labia create the pictorial geometry of an infinite loop. The fingers meet each other at their reflection, producing an image which is, in effect, touching itself twice. As an image, this proposes a concept of pleasure which builds in reproduction; an idea about the desirous body being able to re-create itself in the image of its own pleasure, which liberates that same body from having to perform pleasure for anyone else. Because the mirror is not visualized as such, it is impossible to distinguish between "real" body and reflection. This subtle rejection of the binary logic of self-imaging, of knowing by seeing, asserts that image is not only indistinguishable from body but that the two are co-extensive. Seeing is feeling.

The implication of a mirror also complicates the pictorial ambition of the work, inserting an embedded picture plane within the painting, and proposing that an internal audience pre-empts the viewer in regarding this scene; we are late to the party. This is a conceptual move. Even as the work insists on the importance of pleasure as a form of self-knowledge, by placing both the desirous gaze and its resultant pleasure-as-image within the painting, Faux subverts the idea that the goal of painting should be to please. These are paintings. They want to be looked at. But looking at an image of pleasure which is not *for us* as viewers forces us to consider that these are not paintings about sex, but rather paintings about what it means to be sexual. They are a meditation on how bodies are not only bodies; how images can be both sensations and sensational; and how these sense memories feel in the mind.

Painting, for Faux, is an engine of speculative fantasy, of testing the knowledge and limits of the self and desire. Like looking in the mirror and masturbating, painting is solitary, albeit haunted by what has been meaningful to an artist and what she wishes to become. A surprise in the studio can be like a beloved new kink, an action which blurs the line between "this is what I like" and "this is what I'm like." There's a corollary between the dildos and the paintings, both extensions of the body used to test: What if I did it this way? What if this corner were hot? What if I saw myself like that?

Faux's hammers, like a pair of scissors that have featured in her paintings for years, take on a symbolic and almost directive call to be utilized, by virtue of being tools. As forms, hammers are easily anthropomorphized, and are already verbal euphemisms for sex. Their latent energy, which Faux activates by enlisting them as physical surrogates, does not dissipate quickly. Their presence in the group of paintings, a kind of punctuation, threatens shattering as readily as building. These are Faux's psychic stakes: the availability and plasticity of sensation as a way of learning the self and breaking it down. It is an added, but not insignificant, pleasure that she makes it fun to watch.

— Text by Gaby Collins-Fernandez, 2021

**Sarah Faux** (b. 1986, Boston, MA) received her MFA in Painting from Yale University in 2015 and a joint BA/BFA from Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design in 2009. She has held solo exhibitions at M+B (Los Angeles), Capsule Shanghai (Shanghai, China), and Stems Gallery (Brussels, Belgium), among others. Faux's work has been exhibited in group shows nationally and internationally, including at Loyal Gallery (Stockholm), Fredericks & Freiser (New York, NY), and How Art Museum (Shanghai, China). Faux was awarded the prestigious Gloucester Painting Prize and Residency at Yale, and she has participated in other residencies including Yaddo (Saratoga Springs, New York), Cuevas Tilleard Projects (Lamu, Kenya) and the Lower East Side Printshop (New York, NY). Her paintings have been written about in *Cultured Magazine*, *i-D*, *Vice*, *Surface Magazine*, *Modern Painters*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Interview Magazine*, *Hyperallergic* and *Artsy*, among others. Sarah Faux lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Location:	<b>M+B</b> , 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, California 90069
Show Title:	<i>Sarah Faux: Whatever I see I swallow</i>
Exhibition Dates:	June 4 – July 10, 2021
Opening Reception:	Friday, June 4, 6 – 8 pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment

For all inquiries, please contact [info@mbart.com](mailto:info@mbart.com).



# M+B

CAPSULE  
SHANGHAI

## ARTSHARD | SARAH FAUX: RECONSTRUCTING FEMININE BODIES WITH INTERNAL LOGIC

ARTSHARD, ARTSHARD, JANUARY 22, 2021

For this issue of 'Young, Painting' we talk to Sarah Faux about her recent second solo exhibition *Perfect for Her* at Capsule Shanghai.

**Artshard (A):** Compared to your last solo exhibition "Pucker" at Capsule Shanghai, the works presented in the current iteration take on unconventional formats - cropped canvas and monotype prints. How have you arrived at adopting these forms for your painting practice? What are the features of the format and medium that allow you to better deliver your continuous discovery of the female body and intimate experiences? And what are your thoughts on making works that challenges the "bound canvas"?

**Sarah Faux (SF):** My last solo show at Capsule was entirely stretched paintings, but this show is a special one for me, as it highlights less-shown parts of my practice. I've been making cut-out collages alongside my paintings for about 8 years, so I wanted to let them take up a bit more space! The cut-outs isolate forms from within my paintings and abstract them into these irregular, free-floating objects. In a stretched painting there's an overall illusion of space, but in a cut-out the body lives within the space of the wall, so the gallery itself is activated.

These collages aren't intended as a challenge to canvases, but rather a different way of experiencing the abstract nature of sensory, physical experience. These figures are twisting and contorting themselves



# M+B

into a hieroglyphic-like shapes, like a body trying to find a new form. And in the monotypes I'm able to pick up on that, incorporating elements of collage in the process. My prints are fast, improvised, exploratory works. This show is very personal in that way, both mediums are super direct, where the making is the thinking.

**A:** *The piece Bluet draws references to writer, poet Maggie Nelson's eponymous collection of poems and proses, which in some ways may also remind the viewer of Joan Mitchell's work. Do all of your works make literary or art historical references? What inspires you to paint? In general, what is your artistic process?*

**SF:** I referenced *Bluets* because that book has influenced me hugely. Nelson combines literary, historical, scientific and personal accounts of the color blue in such a fluid way that when I read it I was like "That's it! That's how complex a color is!". While my own work is consistently visual, inevitably layer upon layer of references get embedded in the making - fictional scenarios, paintings I've seen, drawings from life and personal memories. I usually start by drawing people I'm close to in person, then I'll mine those drawings to come up with less literal compositions. The part where my unconscious mind gets most excited is definitely with color. Colors shift and change relative to what they're next to, and in that way feel extremely related to personal psychology. We change and respond to on our surroundings too. We desire things that others desire. Colors become characters in my works that dominate above and beyond any image-content, like the blue of the torso in the piece I called *Bluet*.

**A:** *The works shown in this exhibition, like many of your previous works on canvas, take on the first-person perspective. It is the feminine perspective we have seen in works by Joan Semmel and Luchita Hurtado, among other. While their practices challenged the male gaze of the female body in an earlier feminist movement in the art world, their "closer-to-life" renditions are assertive voices that aimed at making seismic impacts on people's conception of the female body. Your abstract approach however, invites the viewer to peruse through the painted surface, so one may find resonance with one's own experiences in an intimate situation. How have you discovered the approach of adopting personal experience as the conceptual framework of your practice? And how do you think this approach reflect on the current concerns of being a woman in the art world? In your view, how is the current generation of female artists different from the previous generation?*

**SF:** You mention that abstraction invites the viewer to peruse, I'd say my approach invites the viewer to participate, as they construct some kind of image in their mind's eye. I'm definitely building on an earlier feminist approach of thrusting someone into a female body, but through abstraction that becomes a really fluid, active way of looking. My work is concerned with what it feels like to live in a body on sensory level, particularly but not exclusively a feminized body. Because of the trailblazing of artists from earlier generations like Hurtado and Semmel, I have less to prove. I don't have to make sweeping statements on "the male gaze". I can show feminized bodies in greater complexity, not exclusively as products of gender. My paintings embody all kinds of feelings: enjoyment in objectification, full-on hedonism, introverted depression, connectedness or alienation, gender-bending and also non-binary bodies... there's a lot of freedom now.

# M+B

**A:** *Following the previous question, the title of the show "Perfect for her" sounds like that L'Oreal commercial, "You deserve it", or many products commercials targeted to woman. Is it fair to assume that you have embedded the capitalist (masculine) voice as an assumption or a bait that lures the viewer into a group of artworks where the visual reception differs from their expectations?*

**SF:** Yes, I don't think of the voice as masculine per se, but I think of it as capitalist and a bit tongue in cheek. *Perfect for her* is like a snippet of external advertising speech, but the feminine bodies in my show are blown-open then reconstructed with very internal logic. And the viewing is extremely internal as well, as each viewer sees differently. People approach the color, material, emotion and image in my work in different orders, and often even see different configurations of bodies or scenes.

**A:** *Between the Metoo movement and the recent global pandemic, especially that the latter abruptly shortened your artist-in-residency program in shanghai, what were your expectations of presenting this body of works to a foreign audience before the opening, and what kind of feedbacks have you received once the show opened?*

**SF:** I was in Shanghai in January, and had to leave the Swatch residency program unexpectedly due to COVID. I was planning to make the work there and be in China when my show opened, but I ended up back in New York instead. Having shown at Capsule before, I've always loved the responses I've gotten from a Chinese audience. Women have confessed stories about ex-lovers quietly to me in the gallery, as they were injecting my paintings with their own sense-memories. But those kind of raw responses pretty much only happen in person! Instead I'm hearing things over WeChat. One of my favorite responses was from a friend who said that as she walked through the gallery, she felt like she was floating.

© Artshard 艺术碎片

# M+B

## CULTURED

30 UNDER 35 2020

### SARAH FAUX PLAYS WITH PERCEPTION

DEAN KISSICK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUBREY MAYER

Sensual, fleshly and sometimes pornographic, Sarah Faux's paintings bring Matisse, Rubens and Titian to mind. Pinks, fuchsias and lemons set a warm, welcoming tone. Everything begins with drawing from life. She'll pick up her sketchbook and draw people that are close to her, often very close to her, in close-up or from an odd angle. Her own body regularly crops up in these studies as well. Later she'll work these up into larger compositions, into paintings on canvas or unique monotypes with watercolor. Lately she's been spending time in the Lower East Side Printshop printing the latter from plexiglass plates; scroll her Instagram for some rather satisfying, striptease-like videos of that magic moment when the layers are peeled away to reveal the finished work.

Faux—that's her real name, not an affectation (and it's pronounced "Fox")—grew up in Somerville, Massachusetts and now lives in Brooklyn's Crown Heights. Since graduating from Yale in 2015, she's had solo shows in New York, Brussels and Shanghai, and at Frieze New York, and

she's already preparing for another in Shanghai with her Chinese gallery, Capsule. All of her paintings could be considered self-portraits, but perhaps not in the way you'd expect. "I don't actually think of my work as primarily figurative," says Faux. "It's equally, inextricably abstract. My most direct self-portraiture comes through in all the ineffable elements of painting like color and materiality: somatic, emotional content." As both an artist and a subject, she likes to hover between abstraction and figuration. Her pictures spread out into color fields and it's easy to lose track of the number of bodies and their different parts and orientations in space. They become exercises in perception and how it shifts. "I like to keep that imagery floating in the moment right before reality coalesces," she says. "Sort of like lying in bed too close to someone's face to bring it fully into focus."



# M+B

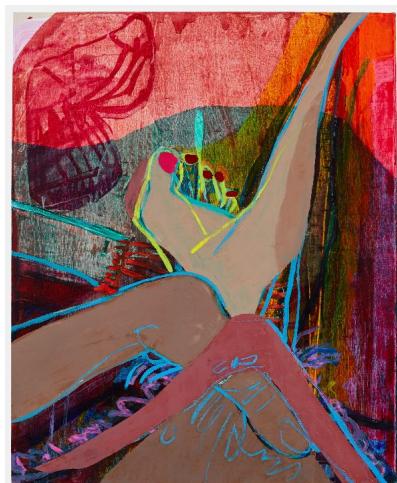
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## SARAH FAUX *Clench and Release*

November 16 – December 21, 2019

### Opening Reception

Saturday, November 16, 2019 from 6 to 8 pm



M+B is pleased to present *Clench and Release*, an exhibition of new works by Sarah Faux. The exhibition runs from November 16 through December 21, 2019, with an opening reception on Saturday, November 16 from 6 to 8 pm. This show, the artist's first with the gallery, includes new paintings as well as a cut-canvas collage.

Sarah Faux's paintings combine figurative representation with abstract elements, creating a visceral connection to both material and subject. In her compositions the body is presented in cropped, fragmented parts—a formal strategy that pulls the viewer into an intimate, up-close perspective where color and line are experienced as sensations inflected with emotion.

For Faux, the process of painting is a way of self-soothing. The frenzied repetition, pouring, then scraping is a pattern of clenching and releasing that occurs over and over, as images coalesce then disperse. In the exhibition's titular painting, interlocking planes of fleshy color form a vertical landscape, cut through by wet lines of oil stick. Two thumb-like sutures gently slip under cloth, graze a nipple and secure these layers of flesh to each other. Constructed from a first-person perspective, the painting thrusts the viewer into a feminine body. She rests her leg on a hairy man who reclines towards the top of the canvas, both bodies conduits for color.

The large-scale cut-out collage in this group functions like a key to the figurative components within the other paintings. Whereas in the other works the body is observed through washes of color, the figure here is clearly evident and determined first through shape, then color.

Faux's sensual and evocative compositions chart the emotional landscapes of the human form. The disembodied shapes, which come into focus then recede into abstraction, synthesize a history of gestural and figurative painting into work that is at once deeply rooted, searching, intuitive and raw.

**Sarah Faux** (b. 1986, Boston, MA) received her MFA in Painting from Yale University in 2015 and a joint BA/BFA from Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design in 2009. She has had solo exhibitions Capsule Shanghai (Shanghai, China), Cuevas Tilleard (New York, NY), Thierry Goldberg Gallery (New York, NY) and Stems Gallery (Brussels, Belgium). Faux's work has been exhibited in group shows nationally and internationally, including Loyal Gallery (Stockholm), Fredericks & Freiser (New York, NY), yours, mine & ours (New York, NY), ltd los angeles (Los Angeles, CA), Capsule Shanghai (Shanghai, China) and Shoot the Lobster (New York, NY). Faux was awarded the prestigious Gloucester Painting Prize and Residency at Yale and has participated in other residencies including Yaddo (Saratoga Springs, New York), Cuevas Tilleard Projects (Lamu, Kenya) and a fellowship at the Ox-bow School of Art (Saugatuck, MI). In 2020, she will be the artist-in-residence at the Swatch Art peace Hotel (Shanghai, China). Her paintings have been written about in *Cultured Magazine*, *artcritical*, *Surface Magazine*, *Modern Painters*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Interview Magazine*, *Hyperallergic* and *Artsy*, among others. Sarah Faux lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Location:

Show Title:

Exhibition Dates:

Opening Reception:

Gallery Hours:

M+B, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, California 90069

*Sarah Faux: Clench and Release*

November 16 – December 21, 2019

Saturday, September 14, 6 – 8 pm

Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment

For all inquiries, please contact [info@mbart.com](mailto:info@mbart.com).



# M+B



## INTERVIEW TO SARAH FAUX *Elisa Muscatelli*

**Elisa Muscatelli** – If you had to recount your artistic research to someone who encounters it for the first time, how would you describe it?

**Sarah Faux** – I paint people without clear boundaries, bodies that cannot be seen quickly because they've dissolved into fields of sensation.

**EM** – In your works important references, from Cubism to Schiele, up to Frankenthaler and Krasner, are easily identified and combined with a very pop color palette. Is there an artistic movement with which you identify yourself and that has influenced you the most?

**SF** – I've spent a lot of time looking at painters who play with color perception, like Rothko's vibrating color fields or Bonnard's sleeping dogs hidden within passages of far-out optical mixing. I'm also indebted to artists who've embedded charged imagery into works that read overall as abstract, like Ghada Amer and Ellen Gallagher. But ultimately I'm a contemporary painter, chewing up and spitting out influences constantly, and more identified with my peers than with any 20th-century movement.

**EM** – After a few years of painting production, your cut-outs came out. They remind me a lot of a grown-up version of the '70s DIY paper dolls: how did you approach this stylistic practice? And how has your approach to the canvas changed?

**SF** – I've made cut-out pieces for at least 8 years now, and actually they predated my first painting shows. I made them to help me organize my thoughts and my oil paintings, which were really ambiguous at the time and weren't conjuring up bodily experiences as much as I wanted them to. Drawing from life and then making cut-outs of the forms I recorded really helped me to see that our physical bodies look very abstract already. So if I wanted to create paintings about

# M+B

abstract feelings, I realized that I didn't need to obscure the figure so much as I just needed to reveal the figure's weird, shifty, inherently abstract nature.

**EM** – You have described the production phase of the paintings as a thoughtful process, that needs a long executive time, that dialogues perfectly with a narrative tendency but at the same time is in contrast with an instinctive and abstract doing that characterizes it. I was wondering how these two components manage to dialogue giving life to the visual description of a body which is, by its nature, in constant changing.

**SF** – I think you're asking about the inner and outer life of a person. The body is one of the only things we experience from both inside and outside, so I always want to keep those elements in tension within my work – exterior narrative experiences and inner unnameable sensations. So I start my paintings with an image composition in mind, like let's say a couple grinding on each other with their elbows sticking out in awkward opposing triangles. Then I'll pull colors, forms and shifting materiality to the forefront just enough to let that glimpse at the couple slip away. I go back and forth until I strike the balance that scratches my own itch.

**EM** – Color seems to be a central part of your artistic practice and more generally of your theoretical interest, in fact, one of the books that particularly struck you is Maggie Nelson's *Bluets*, in which blue is at the center of a subjective and philosophical meditation. What is your approach to color? Do you think it has a certain type of spirituality that you use on a symbolic level?

I remember learning about pigments in college, and realizing there was really specific language for small differences between the variations of one hue, like for example blue – cobalt, cerulean, ultramarine, prussian, indigo, etc. The thrill of playing with those subtle differences has never worn off. Color relationships trigger intense sensations for me, both feelings like longing or joy, and also synesthetic responses like sexual desire or a distinct temperature (i.e. heat). Maggie Nelson's *Bluets* does justice to the complexity of the color blue in a way that I feel incredibly grateful for.

As for my own approach to color, I don't see it as symbolic because every color is too shifty to symbolize any one thing. But I feel that shiftiness profoundly, in the same way, I feel my physical and emotional worlds always shifting, fragmented, never forming a static whole.

**EM** – In the contemporary art scene there is a lot of talk about avatars, A.I. and digital alter ego that are used as an extension of one's body within a digital reality capable of emancipating itself from the physical and moral limits of everyday reality. It is interesting to note how your works share this desire for body extension, although with a very different language. I would like to know how you approach this thematic.

**SF** – That's an interesting parallel to draw. I think of my paintings as perceptual puzzles much more than I think about them containing nameable characters or avatars. But the desire to transcend the confines of the self is very much present in my work. Often, I orient my paintings from an up-close, first-person point of view to make the piece into an extension of the viewer's body.

# M+B

**EM** – The expressive freedom, especially when it comes to sexuality, of women has always had to compromise with the surrounding society. You talked about a force that comes from buried anger and the need to overturn the male pain (point?) of view. Do you believe that art should take on this ethical responsibility towards the new generations?

**SF** – Yes, but not necessarily directly. I don't think art needs to illustrate 'ethical values'. At the same time, my paintings are loose, sloppy, and sexual, because I want to pull viewers into a loose headspace that's free of certain hang-ups. There's an ethical core to that impulse. The bodies in my work betray their boundaries because those confines are limiting. The verbal, narrative world is limiting. Bringing people into a headspace where gender and desire are as shifty as color, that feels liberating.

# ART SY

## The 10 Best Booths at Frieze New York

### Capsule Shanghai

Frame Section, Booth F1

With works by Sarah Faux



Installation view of Capsule Shanghai's booth at Frieze New York, 2019. Courtesy of Capsule Shanghai.

Look for long enough at Sarah Faux's painting and canvas collages (each priced between \$5,000 and \$14,000), and they'll gradually resolve into depictions of body parts. *I'd be a shitty girlfriend* (2019) features abstracted pink legs and a hand with nails painted bright red; while in the background, blue eyes peer from a pink face. The collages on the opposite wall extract and reconfigure elements of the painting. One work appears to be a bare breast atop a zebra pattern; another resembles a woman's nude body, seen from behind. The bright, funky palette and Faux's thin, swerving line make her oeuvre seem like a feminist response to the jarringly sensual work of Egon Schiele.

# CULTURED

## SARAH FAUX PAINTS NAKED SENSATIONS

BARRY SCHWABSKY

04.15.2019



SARAH FAUX WITH AN IN-PROGRESS CUT-OUT COLLAGE THAT WILL DEBUT AT FRIEZE NEW YORK THIS MAY. PORTRAIT BY ISABEL MAGOWAN.

What is the process of painting but a long and never-fully-resolved lovers' quarrel between touch and vision, hand and eye? That blissful moment when our not entirely congruent senses find a momentary reconciliation looks like the ultimate subject of most of Sarah Faux's paintings. Since graduating from Yale's MFA program in 2015, Faux—whose family name is pronounced “fox,” not “foe,” by the way—has found considerable acclaim, with one-person shows in Brussels and Shanghai as well as a couple of them in New York. And while her subject matter has remained consistent, her technique seems to be getting both more refined and more forceful by the day.

Stopping by Faux's Crown Heights studio as she was preparing for her solo booth at Frieze New York with Capsule Shanghai, I found myself surrounded by half a dozen medium-sized paintings in progress or recently finished, as well as a few smaller ones and parts of a couple of her “cut-outs.” These are collaged



canvas wall works that, she explains, reflect a lineage that goes back to Matisse's reconstructed bodies. At Frieze New York, she intends to use them as works in themselves as well as backdrops on which to hang paintings—something she hasn't done before. She also showed me a sheaf of monotypes recently made at the Lower East Side Printshop.

As with many of Faux's paintings so far, the new ones are situated in a curious state of ambiguity between abstraction and representation, not unlike the work of some of the midcareer painters who've clearly inspired her, such as Amy Sillman and [Charline von Heyl](#). The first time I went to Faux's studio, all I could see at first was the abstraction—until, noticing that I was missing the point, she gently pointed out that all the paintings included figurative imagery, however loose or fragmented: here a hand, there a foot; here a nipple, there a behind; here a head, there a mons pubis... I was mortified, but she seemed tickled at being able to sneak in her corporeal references so subtly that her paintings could be enjoyed as just strikingly composed—that is, appealingly awkward—abstractions, even by mistake. Now, hyperconscious of my former obliviousness, I tend to see the images in Faux's paintings first.

But when I then go on to describe the works by way of what they represent, which is hard to avoid, I somehow feel that I am doing them a disservice—that I am misdescribing as much as describing. Consider one of those I saw in the studio, in which the bottom of the canvas is occupied by part of an outlined male head—closed eyes with delicate lashes, nose, a bit of beard—while most of the rest of the rectangle is occupied by a hand that, under a spray of lovely cursive squiggles, floats in with considerable spatial ambiguity from the left—though where its wrist should be, aren't those a couple of fingers, presumably of some completely other hand? I had to wonder: Is this a painting of one person, or two, or three? Differences dissipate as self or selves fragment. I'm inclined to believe that closed-eyed man must be dreaming those hands. But it makes me think that I might be dreaming too. When I see those eyes at the bottom of the painting, below the nose that is in turn below the chin, it's as if my own head's been turned upside down—a voluptuous vertigo. There's an effect that was noticed long ago by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890): “when we look at a landscape with our head upside down” or “lie on the floor and look up at the mouth of a person talking behind us”—like turning a painting upside down—what we see becomes estranged, and “we feel more freshly the value of the mere tints and shadings”; whatever we look at, even a human face, “we get it as a naked sensation and not as part of a familiar object perceived.” Something like that happens in this painting. No wonder it's titled *Tinges* (2019).

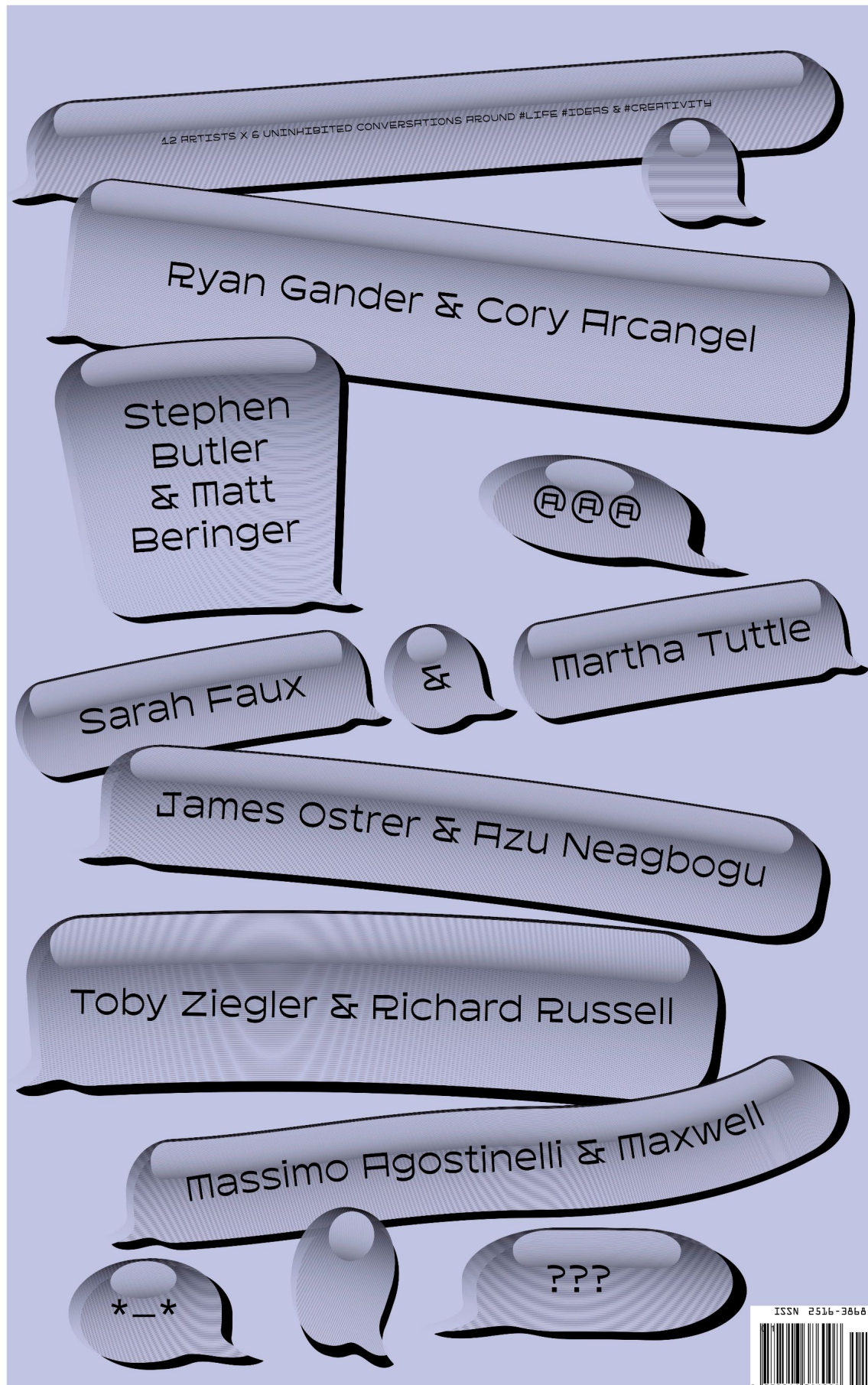


Faux's paintings are seriously sexy, not because they show bits of naked people, but because they do so in order to get at what James called naked sensation. She makes us intimate with color and facture. In *Tinges*, which I suspect has learned some of its fluency and immediacy from the monotypes, we make contact with a scarlet opacity and a cream translucency, with blue lines bent like iron wire and nameless gray stains that seem to linger under the surface of the canvas like blushes or bruises; our eyes seem to feel their way through layers of appearance, more like hands. Dry or wet, delicate or crude, smooth or sharp, there are as many kinds of touch in how paint rubs up against itself or sinks into or floats atop the canvas as there might be between any lovers, and they're all in the painting.

# ART OF CONVERSATION

no news paper. 12 artists x 6 uninhibited conversations around #life #ideas & #creativity

Autumn 2018 £5.00



MARTHA

TUTTLE

and

SARAH  
FAUX in

Brooklyn,  
New York.

On bodies,  
touch

and

meditation





SF: I was thinking about all the rocks and the addition of rocks into your paintings and how that's connected to Zen gardens and things. And I'm wondering what you're thinking about that. And I had more specific questions for you.

MT: I had questions for you too do you want to switch off or I don't know how to do this --

SF: -- or I can ask you about rock stuff and then you could see if there's anything that's interesting?

MT: Sure. So yeah, I mean first I feel like the act of walking and collecting anything is such a human impulse and it is a meditative one, like looking at the ground, understanding your surroundings on a very small scale, so that's how the rocks first started coming into my work, just through purely picking them up and having them in this studio. Then I was just thinking about the kinds of objects that you hold with you and thinking about worry stones and prayer beads and then having the fantasy that through such extreme emotion one could transform something through touch into another material. That the transformation would be the record of intense emotion or a thought --

SF: within paintings or works?

MT: Specifically with the stones from stone to steel. With this last project that I've been doing for the gallery in Italy there's 250 cast stones and 400 real stones and in my studio I've been enjoying taking off my shoes and socks and making constellations with my toes and that feels good. Like Zen Gardening or dancing. And I think a lot of Joan Jonas performing and painting--

SF: Are you going to make people walk over the stones? Is this something you've been thinking about?

MT: Well yeah I've been thinking about it a lot because even in my space when I know they're there, I accidentally kick them places like often it takes a little bit of adjustment to realize that there are small things on the floor. So I imagine that people probably will kick them. I'm not worried about them being damaged because they're stone and steel, but I have been thinking about it. It might be stressful for somebody to feel like they kicked art --

SF: Or it could feel really gratifying that they're encouraged to step on things. Like when I was like 18 and realized that you are allowed to step on a Carl Andre. I would go to the museum to step on it and then tell the guard 'I'm allowed to step on it!'

MT: Does it make you feel anxious though? It makes me feel really anxious because I really want to do it and then I have to work up the courage and every time in every setting --

SF: -- it feels really. Yeah, I think it makes me feel triumphant. Like, 'Ahaha you're not so precious after all!' I don't know. And I, I think I felt some kind of triumph that I knew I was allowed to, I felt like I had an insider knowledge that I'm allowed to do this, the artist intended this.

MT: That is a hidden part of it -- in Martha -- there the Andre's go over the stone path so they feel like rocks in the river. And you stand on them outside, and can look out into that West Texas

landscape. They're kind of unnatural works in general, but seeing them in that context. That humanized them a lot for me. I think after that I became more comfortable with stepping on them in an artificial space or a gallery space.

SF: That makes sense. Well I was thinking about with rocks I feel like your work is clearly connected to meditation and thinking about your paintings as facilitating meditation or -- have you been to Japan? You've probably been --

MT: I went to Japan a year and a half ago.

SF: Oh, you went on your own, right? Yeah, I remember.

MT: Yeah, I had a free ticket voucher.

SF: So did you go to Kyoto? Did you go to the rock garden? Ry an-ji. It's the most famous Zen rock garden.

MT: I did and I was prepared to -- I think the tricky thing with Zen, is that it's had such an impact in my life and then there's a big part of me that feels still inappropriate to love it --

SF: Because it's not the culture you're born into or?

MT: Yeah, I think because it's not the culture I was born into.

SF: But aren't you practicing Zen meditation?

SF: We have gone together before -- I know your secret!

MT: When I was in Kanazawa, I went to see D.T Suzuki's museum. He was the guy who kind of brought Zen Buddhism to the US so to speak and he gave a bunch of lectures at Columbia -- I think in the fifties which Reinhardt, John Cage and Agnes Martin

one lecture can really shape the course of things --

SF: That is crazy to think about, especially when the way that information spread was less rapid!

MT: Totally but maybe even more so because of that or, I don't know, like one summer of Black Mountain and being at Black Mountain and Cage and Cunningham being able to dance together there. I think it really did shape the course of 20th century art history, but it's just one little moment of probably drinking beers and hanging out. Anyway in the Suzuki museum, there are these beautiful pools of water and it started raining and it dropped these ripples in the water and in my memory, those little ripples and the rock gardens are very conflated.

SF: I saw that garden when it was Fall, so the leaves were insane in the park around the Temple. So that's when I remember it, the colour was so, so intense. It was really overwhelming. It's the most intense natural colour I've ever experienced -- to be in Japan in the Fall, or Kyoto in the Fall.

MT: You lived in Japan for a year?

SF: Less than a year, but I was there for half a year --

MT: So still pretty intense. I mean you were in your early twenties, right? What made you want to go to Japan?

SF: I studied Japanese when I was in high school and college and was really interested in modernist Japanese literature and how they were in a repressed culture where things, especially sex and violence would be so intense in these novels. Like there's a lot of like BDSM stuff in Mishima or other modernist writers that I feel really appealed to my angst high school self that it was just, it felt just kind of explosive -- the way teenage energy is kind of explosive. So I was really into that.

MT: Can you -- is there an example that sticks with you? Like a book or a scene from a book?

SF: I mean there was a lot that I was into

at the time -- there's a book that Mishima wrote called 'Confessions of a Mask' -- Did you read that?

MT: Yeah

SF: It's repressed homosexuality and then mutilating his own body and all this intensity. I remember more of the feelings from it. You maybe remember more than I do --

MT: No, I read it a while ago. You're making me think also of Mishima's The Temple of the Golden Pavilion. That ability to show an internal complexity of a person is just mind blowing to me. And even in translation, I'm sure you were able to read it partially in Japanese.

SF: No -- my Japanese was at a middle school level --- let's say 6th grade. But yeah, no, that one. And the guy has a club foot. I think there's something terrible comes through in that and in

Jap-

anese mod- with him his foot and feel- that

ernism, dragging around ing he's undesirable in society

MT: and post-war --

SF: yeah, but the scene from that stuck with me forever and that makes me crazy is, at the beginning his dad has been telling him about this temple and he goes to visit it for the first time and it's disappointing. But there's a model of the temple in the lobby of the temple and he's way more into the model than the temple itself. I read that in college and I thought, oh my god, this is about art. Like the symbolic construction of something can be better --

MT: Yeah of course! Well it's also and maybe that is in my limited experience, a hallmark of Japanese modernist literature is the ability to see something very simple, which is that an idea or a model of a thing can mean so much more than the actual experience. But then, in that simple thing, being able to show how much it can wrench your heart or call to action --

SF: Well there's something really poignant about identifying more with the model. It is almost like him not being able to be fully in the world or something there's some, there's some kind of weird distancing that happens if you are the type of person who would prefer the model. There's a loneliness to it -- that I can identify with.

MT: Have you read that book? I'm trying to think of the title. Um, it's by Kenzaburo Oe...?

SF: A Personal Matter?

MT: Yeah

SF: Yeah that one's crazy!

MT: Yeah and the idea of this deformed baby, but it actually was fine. And that the two things totally coexist, this feel-



Like Zen Gardening or dancing



ing of something being horribly and irreparably deformed and then actually salvageable. That's really interesting to me. But then that last part where that teacher told them to look up hope in the dictionary or something. And then in the end, like the last line of the book is like "and he opened the dictionary and he decided I'm not going to look up hope I'm going to instead look up the word for forbearance" I don't know -- that really gets me. So one of the questions I actually had for you is -- how has your relationship to meditation shifted in the last year and also do you see it affecting your practice?

SF: That's a good question. When I started meditating it was with you and Marcela probably almost two years ago, which is cool. But, um --

MT: I guess then my question should be how has your relationship to meditation developed in the past two years?

ST: I feel like I always thought that I should be meditating and then I started doing it with you guys. It was like everything that I think about in painting made manifest in this real experience because it's so much about the connection between physicality and emotion and experiencing your own thoughts as sensation which I've always thought about in painting and it's like I have to make paintings that are experienced both primarily as sensory abstract experiences, but also they have to have more cerebral image constructions in them. Because that's how reality is to me, you know, so it has to be both things at once to feel like it's doing what I wanted to do. But I feel like meditation -- it's kind of clarifying. It's like everything I learned in meditation will be like, Oh, right.

MT: Can you say again this distinction, the sensorial experience, the real or the referential? Is that the distinction you were making?

SF: Yeah, I feel like within painting or -- yeah, I want my paintings to be on the edge of being experienced as something that someone could process cerebrally, like this is an image of a woman and she has her legs open. Then at the same time not being sure if actually it should be processed as "the centre of this painting is just a throbbing red area" or some kind of pulsing warmth or something like that. And I think meditation just helps. It helps me connect my emotions to the physical sensation. I mean the most obvious thing that I think everybody knows if they have meditated is if you're getting stressed out to try and relax your stomach -- to know that somewhere in your front body, is holding the tension of your stress, and so to be aware that your physical tension actually controls partially how you're processing your emotion and vice versa.

MT: And that the boundaries are very porous between the two.

SF: Yeah, so I find that it helps me identify kind of a floating, ambiguous --- to tune into what is actually good --

MT: Which feels very significant for the moments that you choose to paint or not. It's a moment of, well, of two things coming together or extremes -- I've been reading a lot, the Metamorphoses and I love, love, love that it's page after page of extreme emotion or sensation -- shifting material.

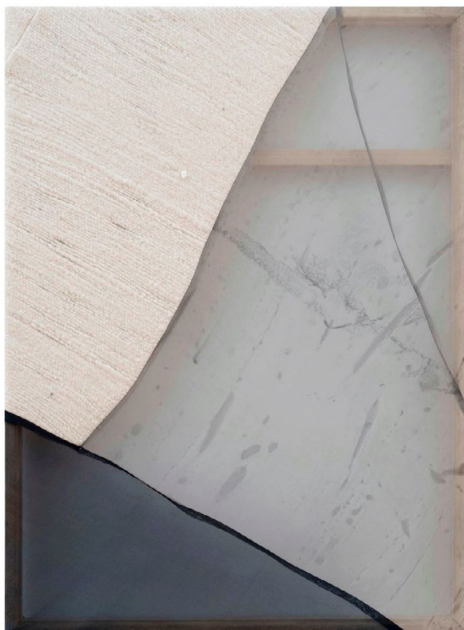
ter from one into other matter, through fear of running away from Apollo, turning into a tree or through the anger of competition, Athena turning Ariadne into a spider. That idea that one thing goes into something else by sensation, emotion, sensorial experience feels very related to your work. But also I love -- if I'm understanding you correctly -- that meditation or maybe finding this spaciousness can make you aware of your own experience of it while you're working.

SF: I love what you're saying about shifting matter because that seems a connector in both of our work, like thinking about what you're doing with materials like wool and silk. How I would think about it all through oil paint but it would be a similar kind of impulse of this painting needing to have an area that's really loose and washy and kind of slipping away and something that's really concrete and hard and it's a flat surface. There's some kind of meeting there -- because our work looks so different from each other. But I do feel like we think about similar things sometimes.

MT: Yeah, I guess I'm always really interested in what is that instance when they touch. Because anything can get used to anything else, but but to think about the charge of the first touch between two different matters and the emerging space between them after that moment -- that feels very erotic, not just in a sexual way, but I feel like maybe both of our works deal with this.

SF: Do you think of your work as erotic?

MT: Yeah, I think about the erotic a lot, I think. Well I'd be curious about what your definition of erotic is because mine is always shifting --



SF: I'm not sure because I feel like it's such a wide category. The erotic can become like the erotics of plain blah blah. Like the erotics of material. The erotics of anything really. But I mean, my work like has sex in it so -- images of sex -- so I feel like it has to inevitably come up --

MT: But I feel like the erotic in your work is, yes images of sex but it's also in the materiality of it and the exploration of touch and one quality next to another.

SF: Well, all of the paintings that I'm making right now for the Shanghai show are all one figure on each canvas. So I mean they're abstract paintings, but each one is based on one body. So what you're saying is maybe even truer right now where it's like within one body, what if part of you feels soft and part of you feels hard or part of you feels like it doesn't want to be seen and part does want to be seen. So thinking about how people present themselves and when they're constructing themselves, how -- like I guess I think about veils and transparency and what do you show and what do you hide, what do you want, where do you feel concrete? So each painting has kind of a different take on that for me.

MT: I guess that relationship between distance and absorption gets to where I define erotic. I think desire, desire is a lot of it, but desire is to me both, the existence of distance somehow also closing it. How desire or longing can bring a person closer to something that if they already possessed it, and took it for a given.

SF: It's actually really related to something I was thinking about. I think -- but I couldn't articulate it, but I'm thinking about distance. It's similar to the thing that we were talking about before, about the temple that there's some way in which you standing in it is less powerful than it being apart from you.

MT: Exactly. Exactly. And I think that there can be this experience of being apart that actually makes you feel more with. For example, maybe it's the moment between a hard material on a soft material where they just comes together before the distance is completely melted. Touching with the tips of your fingertips rather than fully grasping and suddenly the space becomes charged. Does that make sense?

SF: It make sense to me. Yeah, I've been thinking a lot about hiding and concealing cause I want the ambiguity in my paintings to be really in your face, but then there's this weird thing of this dual impulse of -- being ambiguous is not being in your face. Being ambiguous is being a bit cagey and kind of evading being categorized. It's sort of a sneaky way to work around a quick read of your paintings

MT: Do you know what the etymology of ambiguous is? I mean, ambi is both.

SF: Shall we look it up?

MT: Yeah. Do you feel like it's dishonest to be ambiguous?

SF: No. I feel like it's more honest to feel -- it is a driving force because it feels more true to my own experience in thinking about sexuality. I think a lot about being both objectified and then objectifying yourself and then being lost in sensations or really detached. There's so many different roles that people play in relationship to other people.

MT: Most practically for me, the way that I see my work as erotic -- is because the way I've learned how to touch material is through touching other people and vice versa. At the same time, however I find a huge sense of empathy when I read someone like Teresa of Avila, Hildegard von Bingen, who talk about an intense desire for a union with God, especially after experiencing small moments of God's presence through prayer or other ecstatic experiences. How that kind of experience of closeness can evoke an overwhelming desire to be closer to things -- but way more intimate than the boundaries of skin or the boundaries of material allow. Erotic closeness becomes defined for me as a kind of intimacy of spirit. That's what gets really interesting. To me this is an interesting ambiguity. Both closeness and distance at once.

SF: To drive in both ways. Ambi means both ways and here in Latin means to drive, to waver or go around -- and then ambiguous: it meant doubtful and now it means obscure.

MT: Interesting.

SF: But I like to drive both ways. I mean when I think about being in between figuration and abstraction, which I guess are the terms I end up having to use, but um, my drive is in both directions and sometimes those impulses are more in harmony and sometimes they're totally clash-

It's sort of a sneaky way to work around a quick read of paintings

ing. Sometimes the abstraction, the paint itself and the narrative image in it are connected with each other, which is a way that I experience reality sometimes. But I was thinking about when you were talking about touching material and thread -- about how you were like an ER person or like an EMT. And just kind of how maybe that healing touch can be connected to developing the work that you're now making.

ter from one into other matter, through fear of running away from Apollo, turning into a tree or through the anger of competition, Athena turning Ariadne into a spider. That idea that one thing goes into something else by sensation, emotion, sensorial experience feels very related to your work. But also I love -- if I'm understanding you correctly -- that meditation or maybe finding this spaciousness can make you aware of your own experience of it while you're working.

feels like it doesn't want to be seen and part does want to be seen. So thinking about how people present themselves and when they're constructing themselves, how -- like I guess I think about veils and transparency and what do you show and what do you hide, what do you want, where do you feel concrete? So each painting has kind of a different take on that for me.

tive a paint-just not with each other, which is a way that I experience reality sometimes. But I was thinking about when you were talking about touching material and thread -- about how you were like an ER person or like an EMT. And just kind of how maybe that healing touch can be connected to developing the work that you're now making.



I think I like tend to want to be in a hyper emotional state, so whatever it is, to be feeling it a bit too much. sometimes I'll

Sarah Faux Breathe under water. 2017, oil on canvas. 72 x 56 inches

- put the same song on repeat or two songs that are book ends of each other and put that in a loop. One is the happy part and one is the sad part. I feel like that works pretty well, but a lot of times I'm putting on something really upbeat and pop-y that gets me the energy that I need, and it's a little hyperactive. But yeah. I don't know. Wouldn't it be different though if you're sewing?
- MT: Well with spinning or weaving I don't listen to anything – but when I'm actually making the pieces and I am more careful about what I have on.
- SF: Like if you're arranging?
- MT: Yeah because then the energy that your body is feeling by hearing music affects the choices and the compositions that come out of it. And I used to feel kind of like, oh that's not as serious. But recently I have been feeling differently. Even whatever the most popular songs are, they are popular for a reason. Like the definition of popular is that they affect many people. And so to be one of many feels actually really important when making work.
- SF: I thought it was so cool that your image was used for that Claudia Rankine play because that felt like your work was accessible to -- if we're thinking about pop, -- it made me really happy to see that somebody outside of the art world could feel super connected to your work in this literary way –
- MT: Thank you. Well really any time where I feel like my work can go out and be felt or understood in a way that can speak to our current culture. I don't think that at every moment in history art and community have always needed each other, but my personal feeling is that at this moment right now art and people are so inextricably linked and it's important to me in my practice that it can reach out and touch other people or link to this world. Do you think about that?
- SF: Yeah, I mean I feel like I want to make things that suck people in and then they're in it and they have to battle it out, that's important to me.
- MT: Who do you feel in dialogue with contemporary artists or musicians or even an idea or a song, or a book?
- SF: I mean Maggie Nelson. To make something that's inspiring on so many different registers. There's theory, there's personal narrative, there's reverberations of that into literature, art history. I like to think that the paintings that I'm making, they're very collage based in their origins. And painting is just like that – really rhizomatic you know, where it's connected to a million things at once and referencing a million things at once.
- MT: but I think that's actually really interesting to me because so much of the way Maggie Nelson is about questioning appropriation. The texts that she takes from incorporated into her own and that your paintings in some ways -- could be appropriating from your collage and I think that's how I imagine her practice would be: reading and collecting moments and how they all come together.
- SF: -- and it's, I mean, I guess allowing things to be inconclusive, just kind of an unspoken, an amalgamation of things. Do you have people that you're want to be connected to?
- MT: Yeah. I made a list of artists whom I was most influenced by recently – contemporary from our generation. And for the most part they were young women, uh, working with material based sculptural practices. Um, but ones that showed perhaps the porousness of things, so someone like Anicka Yi, I love her. Anything that evokes malleability of matter or boundaries not being set really gets my heart fluttering. So you, where do you think you're going – with your own work or in life? Just in general. However you feel like answering.
- SF: I feel like I've felt this drive that I had to say everything all at once, immediately, especially leaving school and then putting work out in the world. Now I feel a lot more slow. That could be an effect of meditation also, but I feel like this group all deals with one type of absorbency and the next group might have a really different surface. Like maybe before I'd make 20 paintings that were all different from each other and now I can make 20 bodies of work out of each one.
- MT: my first thought is that is a beautiful meditation -- one thing at a time and I imagine that the more you do it, the more it would be broken down more and more and more, but in another way it feels like that not needing to be everything, just needing to be one thing and one thing being able to carry a whole body of work or a whole show.
- SF: Yeah and I spent years wondering when I would develop a body of work, but what is a body of work? It's also interesting that it's called body -- See I find that fundamentally weird. If there's this assumption of body and wholeness, I don't know if I can get with that --

@marthattuttle @fauxsarah





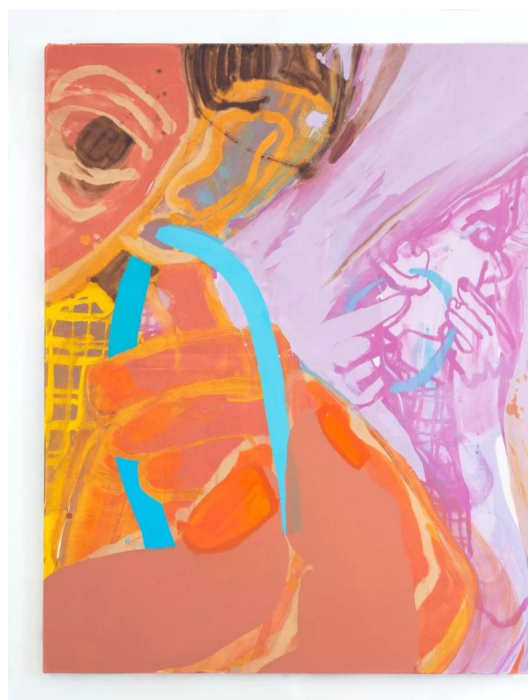
## ARTSY | CHENG XINYI, HU ZI, SARAH FAUX – “FEMALE GAZE” UNDER MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

STEPHANIE FAN, ARTSY, JULY 23, 2018

When facing a painting, will the artist's gender identity fundamentally alter the way one sees the work? This simple question has permeated discussions of art appreciation for nearly half a century.

In the context of representational art, the term “female gaze” generally refers to the observation and description of a work from a female perspective. The film critic Laura Mulvey first introduced the concept of the “male gaze” in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). She concluded that traditional films always imposed a masculine point of view onto the viewers who were led to view the world through a male perspective, turning women into mere objects of desire. Since then, numerous works have emerged to subvert this traditional male perspective in art history. Women are no longer passive objects to be viewed. Instead, they now stand up and walk behind the canvas or lens as active observers.

Traditional “female gaze” artworks have focused on reversing the power relations between genders. Three female artists, however, offered varied dimensions for “female gaze” through the use of different perspectives and narrations at three recent exhibitions in Shanghai. Cheng Xinyi, a young painter based in Paris and Shanghai, portrays the males around her through a third-person perspective. By exchanging glances with these males, she examines the parallel relations of desire and power between the two genders. Hu Zi, a painter based in Shanghai, constructs a perspective similar to the “free indirect style” in fiction writing. Through her observation and substitution of male characters, we can gain a new understanding of gender and body. Sarah Faux, a painter from Brooklyn, New York, uses canvas as her body. Through a first-person perspective, she attempts to liberate the true female experience from the trap of a passive gaze.



### **Sarah Faux: Canvas Is Body**

Sarah Faux, an American artist who recently held a solo exhibition—*Pucker*—at Capsule Shanghai, also investigates the relationship between body and gender. What sets Faux apart is her portrayal of females alone—males rarely accompany them. Most of the women she paints are naked and only partially presented.

Every painting begins with a private moment, followed by fragmented movements capturing a female's physical experience in an intimate setting.

In a recent dialogue with the Yuz Museum, Faux mentioned that she had been inspired by American feminist oil painter Joan Semmel, who painted her own body as she gazed down at herself, altering the art-historic tradition of painting a female from a male perspective. Yet, once the body enters the gaze—even if said gaze comes from oneself—the artist nonetheless becomes self-conscious. According to Faux, classical artistic language is permeated with male DNA; in order to escape this language and open a “crack” between the image and the audience, Faux turns her canvas into her body.

“I dream...of creating a sensory setting [on canvas] outside the body, and allowing the audience to fill that white space with imagination and physical memories,” Faux said.

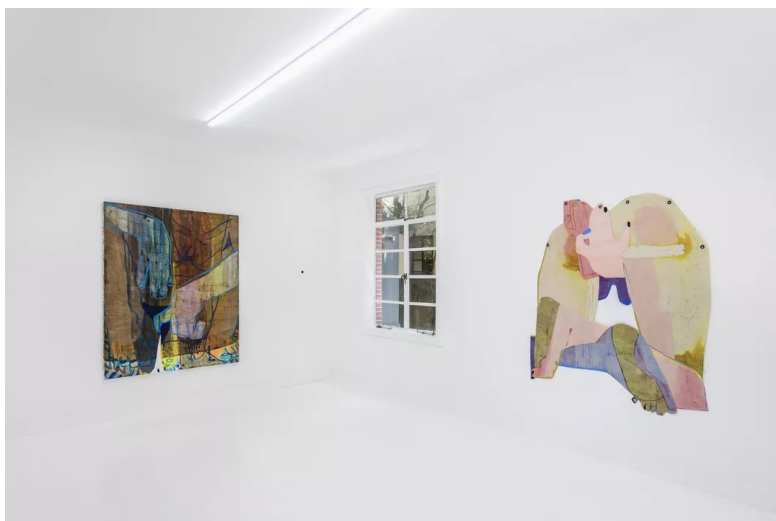
In her paintings, Faux dissects the body, zooming in on body parts. The skeleton is typically the frame of the canvas—or the external contours of the cloth collage. The oil paint poured onto the sketch of the body (coated with a strong water-absorbing primer) is immediately scraped off to create a flat “skin” made visible when hues are soaked into the canvas fibers, while the coarse texture of the canvas resembles skin pores. In this composition, the viewer enters an intimate first-person perspective. What fascinates Faux the most are the moments when one's self-awareness slowly fades, for example, when a female painting subject indulges in dressing up (*Wet Mirror*, 2018), experiences a moment of ecstasy (*White Smoke Rose*, 2018), or plays with her private parts when no one is watching (*Comedown*, 2018).

As John Berger wrote in *Ways of Seeing*, “Only a man can make a good joke for its own sake”, whereas a woman makes a joke to express how she expects herself to be treated by others. A woman's double role of an observer and the observed requires her to constantly monitor and check her behavior as others' impressions have replaced her own feelings.

Faux believes that, in the social space created by the male-dominated patriarchal system, women are typically more sensitive to their appearances and their bodies. “Therefore,” the artist notes, “my paintings present women's real characteristics in the public space, making these images a source of pleasure, rather than a source of shame.”

When facing the intimate movements pushed in front of us in Faux's paintings, we digest the shame about sex, exiting from others' alarming gaze and returning to the important intimacy reserved for ourselves.

Translated by Liuyu Chen



# CUEVAS TILLEARD

**SARAH FAUX**

*11am Mirror Hole*

January 17 - February 25, 2018

On view 24/7

*Our life in this world  
is like the image one sees  
inside a mirror -  
something that's not really there,  
but then not really not there.*

Minamoto no Sanetomo (12th Century Japan)



Cuevas Tilleard is excited to present *11am Mirror Hole*, a cut-paper piece by Sarah Faux in their 291 Grand Street window. The installation will be on view from January 17 - February 25, 2018.

For a number of years, Faux has considered Japanese shogun poet Minamoto no Sanetomo's words on consciousness; how the commonplace act of looking into a mirror may become the fundamental paradox of life.

*11am Mirror Hole* responds directly to the street level storefront window of 291 Grand. It riffs on a beauty shop sign. Yet Faux imbues its familiar symbols - hair, comb, hand - with an overwhelming emptiness, "11am mirror hole."

There is a loneliness to each constituent part of the collage; solitary wisp of hair, hollow ear, broken comb, disjointed wrist.

These parts might coalesce for a moment into the image of a hand pushing a blue comb through fleshy pink hair, only to break apart again the very next instant, like a quick glance in the mirror.

Thursday, February 22nd, 2018

## Sex and Play and Painting: Sarah Faux in conversation with Elena Sisto

by Elena Sisto

**Sarah Faux is the subject of an exhibition at Cuevas Tilleard (Tilleard Projects) on the Lower East Side, titled “11am Mirror Hole” (291 Grand Street, between Eldridge and Allen streets, through February 25.) ELENA SISTO met with the artist in May of last year to discuss her show at that time at the Thierry Goldberg Gallery, titled “Seether”. Images with this interview are from the earlier exhibition.**



Installation shot of Sarah Faux: Seether at Thierry Goldberg Gallery, 2017

The fluidity between objective and non-objective imagery in the work of Sarah Faux interests me. The use of abstract means ties her to earlier painting traditions such as Synthetic Cubism and Abstract Expressionism, but she comes to a fresh synthesis that has a markedly unstable quality. Rather than seeking a final gestalt, image closure seems deferred almost indefinitely. Her painting has a provisional quality that flies in the face of the high production values and internationalist trend in so much recent art.

**ELENA SISTO:** I'm curious to know how you go about making a painting, the relationship of your technique and your physical identification with the space of the picture. You use quite a variety of techniques in your work: For instance, paint can be both matte and shiny in a single painting, sometimes even within one brushstroke. It looks like each painting is started differently. I'm also interested in the identification of your body or self with the canvas, in part because that is something that also matters to me.

**SARAH FAUX:** For a long time now I have seen the canvas as analogous to a body. It's got a skeletal frame with a skin stretched tight over it. It's rough, smooth, oily and waxy like skin, too, and even has little hairs hanging off its edges. I used to take this analogy to its most literal endpoint, painting rectangular torsos where one torso equals one canvas, really looking at the body as an object.

Now I'm a lot looser with this analogy. I'll work on many surfaces at once, and prepare them differently, starting with raw canvas, or a single color, or an oil stick drawing. While I'm preparing a canvas I can get to know its proportions in relationship to my body. I like to make surfaces that are shift. A surface in flux can set a whole painting into motion. Just when an image clicks into place, its edges slip on a patch of oil primer.

**And that is meant to keep everything in motion, unsettled, breaking down hierarchies?**

Yes, I want this shiftiness to keep any quick readings at bay. I'm trying to extend that moment between perception and recognition, prolonging the period where the elements of a painting are just taking shape. Maybe as you're looking an image will coalesce for a moment and then fall away. It's like your eye is touching the canvas, rearranging fragments.



**When I'm painting I want something similar, but I want the viewer to think they know what they're seeing at first and then realize that what they thought they saw isn't really there, except in glimpses. You want yours to be a little more slippery.**

How do you achieve that effect in a figurative painting? Through a specific type of touch or materiality?

**Through shifting back and forth constantly between working on the piece narratively and working on it abstractly or thinking about the physicality of the paint. I especially try never to take two narrative steps in a row.**



Sarah Faux, *Breathe Under Water*, 2017. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 56 inches. Courtesy of the Artist

**We both seem to be interested in the relationship of psychoanalysis to our work and how the self can be conceptualized as a cloud of shifting elements, constantly changing while maintaining some kind of integrity. We both often crop in on our subjects, which to many people would imply a lack of wholeness (cutting off the head of a figure for instance). What about the way social constructs penetrate to the intimate realm? Can you describe the spatial structure of your paintings and the way it supports and provides an arena for these ideas?**

I feel an affinity with your work and how you're able to build a rich internal world for your subjects. I'm trying to do something similar, to crop and isolate a moment of touch between two people, letting the whole painting exist in the interior space between and inside of these bodies. I approach constructing each painting differently, corralling loose puddles of paint into a plaid-like scaffolding in *Too late to be free* or overlaying quick lines on top of a field of gray-blue in *Breathe under water*. I want the process to be analogous to the emotional content of each piece, like trying to contain anger by giving a pour hard edges. I take long periods to look and think between making choices on my paintings. Sometimes I'll take something painted flat on the floor with wet into wet paint and come back into it weeks later to contain those pools of paint with sharp, knifed-on, pressurized shapes.

I'd also say that there's a strong bias toward the narrative in all of our minds, and that a face immediately starts to spin into a story. I'm trying to avoid narrative dominating the somatic, sensory experience of the body, which is present with us always. But we're usually ignoring it, how our body feels. I see those forces battling it out through line versus color. Like the two have a kind of power play going on, where in one painting line and image might dominate and in another the image could be completely subsumed into puddles of yellow.

**So your actual technique or paint handling is more expressive, rather than a gestural brushstroke or a figurative narrative expressionism? It's an age-old conflict between drawing, which is often thought of as more rational, and color, which is thought of as more irrational. So the resolution or non-resolution is different in every case?**

I'm not sure how to define the word expressive, but yes, I am looking for different solutions in each piece. In *E*. I got the most gestural. The painting became a lexicon of drips and marks, semi-linguistic shapes like a giant green letter "E" in loose black parentheses. But that piece is a bit of an exception. In most of these paintings color ends up dominating over gesture or narrative. And ultimately that's an intentional statement, even if it's a consequence of process. I'm advocating for the senses and for the synesthetic power of color to evoke smell, sound, taste. I've been reading a lot of Maggie Nelson lately, along with the rest of Brooklyn, and I loved "Bluets." Through short vignettes she approaches the color blue via her own ex lover, Goethe's color theory, medieval nuns, Joni Mitchell and Joseph Cornell. It's amazing! What a thrilling way to unpack color. I've been keeping it in my head as a working analogy for some deep painting goals.

**How are you choosing colors? Are you working completely intuitively, emotionally, symbolically, spatially, in terms of light? All or none of the above?**

Hmm, it's hard for me to be sure if it's the same driving force each time. I think picking color is the most intuitive part of painting for me. And it's emotional and definitely spatial. I'm drawn to a somewhat pop palette – a lot of straight or just slightly tweaked pigments that suggest nail polish or lipstick shades or maybe commercial packaging and textiles. They're purposefully not naturalistic, both because human behavior is learned and sometimes dictated by commercial forces but also because pure pigments are just so beautiful. I can't resist cobalt, you know? But I'm trying in each piece to let that intense color have a lighting condition as well – backlit, spot lit, dappled light, or even-toned dusk.

**What about manganese, my favorite color. You can't buy it anymore!**

I still use it! But maybe it's imitation manganese?

**Unless you bought it more than a year or so ago, I'm afraid it may be. Does it seem important to protect a certain innocence while you are working? There's a childlike approach to your process. Does this imply a desire to get to an unselfconscious arena within which to play? Is there an effort to reach a place of child-like sexuality?**

Yes, for sure. Without knowing exactly how to put this, I think childhood sexuality is still taboo and the sometimes-childlike nature of adult sexuality is, often, too. Sex and play and painting all feel very connected to me in how they deal with pleasure and power. While I had been under Freud's spell for a while, I got into D.W. Winnicott's ideas about play more recently. Basically, I find a more authentic self comes to light through play than through the narrativizing tendencies of talk therapy. And also that play continues into



Sarah Faux, *Too Late to be Free*, 2017. Acrylic on canvas, 84 x 78 inches. Courtesy of the Artist

the sphere of painting, there's a macho ego associated with the New York School and it's an energy I'm drawn to, and that I've been influenced by—de Kooning, Guston, also Frankenthaler and Krasner—but I'm co-opting that bravado for my own means. There's a fair amount of buried anger in these paintings, hence the show's title, *Seether*, which implies a bubbling, seething, libidinal force under the surface. And I tend to organize my compositions from a first person point of view. I want the viewer to see these paintings as extensions of their own body (in the way of Joan Semmel or Nicole Eisenman). Hopefully viewers, whatever gender they may be, will contend with their own role in a scene. Women are forced to read novels or watch movies with male protagonists an inordinate amount of the time. I'm trying to right the scales a little bit.



Sarah Faux, *E*, 2017. Acrylic on canvas, 74 x 78 inches. Courtesy of the Artist

adulthood. I wouldn't use the word "innocence" though, because that implies naiveté. I'm an academically trained painter, and I'm not trying to "de-skill". Really I just want to tap into a guttural place, not to paint sex as it appears from the outside, but as it's actually experienced, fraught with expectations, anxieties, constraints. And also with moments of uncomplicated release, where an inner child does come out, or an inner animal. I'm also painting from a feminine perspective and want to do so unabashedly to fight against the shame around women's sexuality.

**I couldn't agree more about not being naive or de-skilled. I meant getting to a place where you're not thinking about what other people think, you're right there in the moment with your work, knowing what the next right step is. I'm glad you emphasize that you are an academically-trained artist.**

Can't deny that! There can be a confidence in being a kid too. And maybe that's what you're getting at. A feeling of certainty.

**Isn't that what Winnicott called "going on being"?**

**I understand you also consider yourself a third generation feminist. Would you talk about that?**

SF: I've always considered myself a feminist, thanks to my mother, I'm sure, and I suppose that makes me third wave. In

**Well, I said third generation, I'm not sure what exactly constitutes a wave. I think the identification of the New York School with machismo is a little exaggerated, myself. Were they really so much more macho than anyone else in the culture at the time? And you'd have to say the women were macho then too. Let's not forget how distorted things can get when they are being promoted and marketed. My main issue with A.E. and women is that the women haven't been promoted enough. I think painters in the U.S. have done themselves a great disservice by reacting so strongly against A.E., throwing the baby out with the bathwater.**

I see your point, and I think we're probably agreeing with each other. I'm certainly not throwing out the lessons of Ab Ex or turning away from that tradition, and don't think American painting would benefit from doing so. I was very into Amy Sillman's article a few years ago called "AbEx and Disco Balls". She broke down that gender essentialism we ascribe to AbEx and pointed out that that energy could be seen as fertile as easily as it could be dismissed as being ejaculatory, so why are we so set on labeling AbEx "male"? So maybe I'm revising my earlier comment. I'm a huge fan of Charlene von Heyl, who continues to shape shift while maintaining a deep connection with her material and process. I'd put Dona Nelson in that category, too.

**Earlier you seemed to be mystified by the word "expressive"? Tell me what that is about.**

"Expressive" feels like a historical term to me, and I'm not sure what it means right now. We've been talking about AbEx, but there's also German Expressionism. And geometric abstraction is expressive, political posters are expressive... disconnected from an historical moment, "expressive" feels very general to me. What did you mean by it?

**I'm using the word with a small "e." There's an emotionality to your work without making that your agenda.**

"Emotionality" I can get behind! When we were speaking earlier you'd brought up the difference between psychology vs. emotion in painting, and I'm realizing that emotion might be the stronger force in this group. I'm thinking of emotion as the feelings themselves, which manifest physically and mentally at the same time. And painting is an emotional act for me. If I don't go to my studio for a while, I'm miserable. We tend not to talk about painting as a primal act all the time – opting for a more critical approach to explaining this activity that really consists of manipulating and responding to liquids and colors and textures. So while my paintings are not specifically autobiographical, they do reflect my emotional life.

**I heard a great term the other day: "auto-fiction."**

I loved that Pipilotti Rist video from her New Museum show called "I'm a victim of this song," where she was singing Chris Isaak's "Wicked Game" in this creepy screaming childlike voice. Pop music is so good at expressing feelings that play out over and over again in people's lives, like that feeling of falling in love in spite of yourself or that feeling of a pop song penetrating your psyche! This group of paintings is dealing with tenderness, joy, desire, touch, friction, estrangement and all the abstract, unnamable physical sensations that accompany these basic elements of desire.

# CAPSULE SHANGHAI

## SARAH FAUX: PUCKER

23 JUNE - 23 JULY 2018

From June 23rd to July 23rd, 2018, Capsule Gallery is proud to present “Pucker,” American artist Sarah Faux’s first solo exhibition in Asia. Comprised of new paintings in oil as well as canvas collages, “Pucker” encompasses Faux’s longstanding reflection on the female body and intimacy experience, while highlighting her recent experiments with color, materials, and composition.

In her paintings, Sarah Faux merges the seemingly disparate strands of figurative representation and gestural abstraction to construct sensual situations where raw female bodies drift in a state of liminality. That the protagonist is always female, only occasionally in the company of the other sex, is the artist’s *modus operandi* in this body of work, a deliberate response to an artistic tradition in which the female form is often subjected to fetishization and objectification. But rather than taking a combative position to opt for affirmative representation, Faux conjures bodies that revel in the private moments of a beauty routine, as in *Wet Mirror and Broad Daylight* and *Thin Air* (both works 2018), or in erotic bliss, as in *White Smoke Rose* (also 2018). These invocations of willing consumption—of beauty products and eros—complicate what female agency means in today’s neoliberal world.



Faux crops her subjects to focus on specific body parts, a compositional strategy that pulls the audience into an intimate, first-person perspective. Unable to identify a pronounced figure, we find ourselves gazing into flattened fields of color, parsing the faintly discernible scenes with a curious grin. In looking at these disjointed, fragmented bodies, a public site is activated: we begin to confront and unlearn the shame we have towards our sexuality (and our assumptions of female sexuality), and actively fill in the gaps with our own memories and fantasies.

Biology reminds us that the body is anything but an impenetrable, closed form. Instead, it is elastic and malleable, prone to shifting to conform to its social surroundings. This is further complicated by fluctuating emotional experiences that constantly disrupt one’s conscious experience of a continuous self. What fascinates Faux is precisely those moments when boundaries between states of being dissolve, a dialectic of absorption and dispersion where sensory wires are crossed and confused. In composing the recent works on view, Faux developed an absorbent gesso to prime the canvas. After a first layer of loose line drawing, she pours large amount of paint onto the canvas, which she then quickly scrapes away. The result is a highly flat surface where stimuli from the surrounding environment penetrate the contour of the body and subtly seep into her skin; these bodies, in the same manner, exude emotional flickers that tone the exterior. By flirting with our sense of positive and negative space, Faux’s evocative color compositions weave together charged imagery where the boundaries between inside and outside dissipate.

Roland Barthes famously read the late French writer George Bataille’s erotic classic, *Story of the Eye* (1928), as a series of vignettes threaded together to allow two metaphors—that of the globular and the liquid—to recur. Without spoiling the fun of perusing these paintings, one might step into Faux’s erotic world in a similar fashion, through a stream of ocular parts: a hoop, an eye, or more sensitive parts. Faux’s paintings viscerally absorb us into a liminal space, only to let us return with shimmering intimacy.

-- Alvin Li

# ArtReview Asia



**Tigers,  
modernity  
and Asia's  
subterranean  
histories**

**Zhang Ruyi  
and the  
alienation of  
everyday life**

**Theaster Gates  
on labour,  
community  
and how Donald  
Trump makes  
him work harder**

**Essential  
exhibitions  
during Art Basel  
Hong Kong**

**Ho Tzu Nyen**



*When We Become Us*  
*Capsule Shanghai 15 October – 27 November*

The inaugural exhibition at Capsule Shanghai might prove instructional for Americans still wrangling with the issue of who ought to be admitted to which bathrooms. Despite the complex rhetorics of sex and gender, people are still humans with basic needs. It is this shared ethos and pathos that is eloquently articulated in the group exhibition that binds the works of eight artists in the welcoming space of this expansive lane-house gallery on the historic Anfu Road.

Like her potent video *Men's Bathhouse* (1999), presented at the Polish Pavilion of the 48th Venice Biennale, Katarzyna Kozyra's *Faces* (2005–6) reveals yet another dimension of her subtle yet powerful challenge to accepted social norms. The one-hour-and-28-minute single-channel video of contorted faces, fraught with distress and agony, becomes the focal point of raw emotions revealed by acclaimed dancers performing in various genres from

ballet to hip-hop. The dramatic enunciations inscribed on each visage illuminate the tenuous divide that separates pain from pleasure. Hauntingly poetic, the heightened moments evoking the dancers' interior reflection are enacted upon their faces as if that itself were the stage.

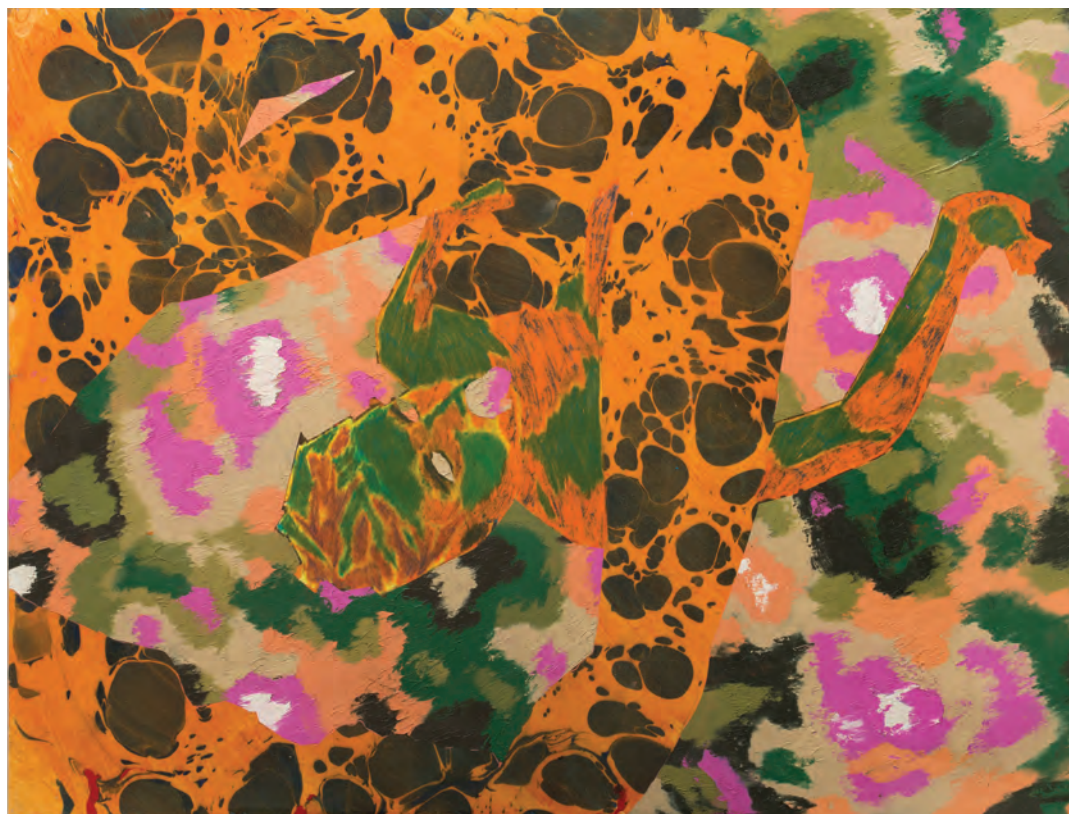
In the gallery's largest space, which over-looks an idyllic garden, painted canvases of reposing male figures by the Israeli-born American artist Doron Langberg adorn the pristine white walls. Each languid body offers up a sense of arresting vulnerability (enhanced by the paintings' vibrant hues) that solicits a voyeuristic gaze. It takes the eyes a moment to adjust before recognising that the figure in the works in the *Bent* series (2012–13) is portrayed in a contorted enigmatic pose alluding to self-lust.

In a similar manner, it takes another few seconds to register that the abstract forms in the paintings by American artist Sarah Faux belong to what she describes as the 'fugue state',

or the slippery zone between figuration and abstraction. She utilises the incongruent viewpoint of multiple perspectives and flattened human forms through compositional overlap to make ambiguous the sexual referent of her figures.

The element of naughtiness is playfully employed in the painting *The MET #3* (2015) by Huang Hai-Hsin, which represents a group of gentrified elderly ladies on a museum visit as they appreciate the frontal details of a sculptural god fully exposed in the nude for their viewing pleasure.

The formidable opening exhibition at Capsule Shanghai allows us to transcend the constraints of our physical bodies by allowing our sentiments to take flight. As we momentarily take leave of our physical selves, the doors and walls of segregation become meaningless in a shared community of mutually inclusive exchange. *Julie Chun*



Doron Langberg, *Bent 2*, 2012, oil and acrylic on paper, 56 × 76 cm.  
Courtesy the artist and Capsule Shanghai

# Flash Art

## 展评 | 忘物志

Edited version of the original article published on:  
Flash Art official WeChat account.  
Last viewed: June 4, 2017

November 24, 2016 顾虔凡



Feng Chen  
S-2 (2016)

*Courtesy of the Artist and Capsule Shanghai*

胶囊上海在蜿蜒的弄堂尽头，老房子经过一番改造，被粉刷得白到发光，且庭院青葱。这间崭新的画廊面目清朗，甚至有点像个包装极度精美的礼盒，不过他们把自己的首展题名为《忘物志》。

Capsule Shanghai is located at the end of a sinuous alleyway, the renovated old house painted in luminous white with a lush backyard. This newly opened gallery has a fresh look, almost as though it were a beautifully wrapped gift box, though their first exhibition's title, 忘物志 - Wang Wu Zhi, literally means "To Forget All Else".

一般来说，画廊所擅长的是充分挖掘艺术创作中物化的面向，以形成流通周转，进而达成有盈余的生态；而胶囊在开篇就昭示要“忘物”，不知道算不算一种带着些自我审视的反观。

Generally speaking, galleries are focused on discovering trends in which artistic creation is materialized and establish an intelligible yet challenging discourse in order to shape a flourishing environment. However, Capsule has made the bold statement to "forget all else" from the very beginning; perhaps this is a kind of introspective reflection.

应该是的。群展中最让人好奇的作品来自艺术家冯晨，他将机械工程、特殊材料、古籍水墨等各种看似不相关的事物融合在一起。《S-1》(2016) 和《S-2》(2016) 中纸本上的热感应墨水，随着铝板背后机械装置散发热量的变化，使图像不断地生成与消失。冯晨早年录像及相关影像装置的学习背景，为他近年的新作补充了有力的注脚：不以录像媒介为形式，但是用机械的、物性的、实时的呈现达成与视频一致的流动影像。他对图像的物质形式进行重新尝试，造出了新物。

It must be. The most curious work in this group exhibition is by artist Feng Chen, who has combined some seemingly unrelated elements in his work, including mechanical engineering, unusual materials and ancient ink paintings. The thermo-stimulative ink on paper works S-1 (2016) and S-2 (2016) reacts to the heat released from the mechanical device behind the aluminum board, which causes the image to appear and disappear on the paper. Feng's early video works and his background in video installation have aided his recent works with a powerful foundation: to not use the video medium as a form, but to present mechanical, physical and real-time elements in order to create moving images. He has experimented with the physicality of image and created something new.





Alice Wang  
*Untitled (2016)*  
 Courtesy of the Artist and Capsule Shanghai

同样有趣的是生活于洛杉矶的艺术家 Alice Wang，她在装置《无题》(2016) 中将一组有着30亿年历史的、被镀上24k金的海百合化石放置在格子窗前，远看像是一把普通而随意的硬币。这个举动轻松地连接起了灰重的远古历史与金灿灿的资本现实。

What is also compelling is an installation by L.A. based artist Alice Wang - *Untitled (2016)*. It consists of a group of 3 billion year old crinoid fossils glided with 24K gold and presented in front of a gridded window, which looks like stacks of ordinary coins from afar. This gesture effortlessly connects the weight of ancient history with the extravagance of capitalist reality.

而在另一方面，《忘物志》又彰显着强烈的恋物癖，并且集中体现在对于身体的，进一步来看也就是对自我的强调。波兰艺术家Katarzyna Kozyra的录像《脸》(2005-06) 被满满地投影在墙面，舞者表演时的面部表情在放大和聚焦中产生了近似于物的质感；美国画家Sarah Faux的作品描绘了各种无意识的身体局部，布面上堆叠着色块和材料试验的间隙当中，显现出手指、乳头等肢体零件；生活于纽约的艺术家廖逸君则直接取男女生殖器为素材，将它们安插到日常物件上，成为可以发挥实际功用的《高跟鞋》(2013) 和《喷奶瓶》(2015)，生殖和恋物崇拜保留其夸张的形式感和物性，同时也隐喻了某种实用主义的状态。

On the other hand, *When We Become Us* manifests a strong sense of fetishism with an emphasis of the body - or the self, in a deeper sense. The video work *Faces* (2005-6) by Polish artist Katarzyna Kozyra is projected across an entire wall, in which the body is almost materialized as an object through enlarging and focusing on the facial expression of the performing dancer. The works of American painter Sarah Faux depict various unconscious body parts, such as fingers and nipples that appear in between the layering of colors on the canvas and experimentation of materials. New York based artist Pixy Liao bluntly employs the genitals of both sexes as her subject, combining them with daily objects, and transforming them into practical devices such as *Soft Heeled Shoes* (2013) and *Breast Spray* (2015), in which the worship of procreation and fetishism have preserved their exaggerated forms and object-hood, while at the same time acting as a metaphor for a certain state of pragmatism.



如果说“忘物”是为了给“新物”腾出记忆和历史的空間，那么胶囊的态度显得谦逊内敛。冯晨和Alice Wang的作品新旧交融，而上述几件强调身体的作品则用恋物来反向补充“忘物”。这些创作似乎都在替这个新空間表明一种含混也平和的态度：说是忘物，倒不如说是在具体的艺术作品面前，对吊诡的概念的忘怀。

"When We Become Us" (2016)  
 Installation view at Capsule Shanghai  
 Courtesy of the Artist and Capsule Shanghai

If we were to say that to “forget all else” is to make room in memory and in history for new things to manifest, then Capsule’s attitude is humble and introverted. The works of Feng Chen and Alice Wang are a mixture of old and new, while the works mentioned above with an emphasis on the body allow the spectator to omit the presented object by employing fetishism. These works seem to be presenting a mixed and yet coherent standpoint on behalf of this new exhibition space: not to speak of forgetting, but rather the disremembering of tricky concepts when a tangible art work is presented.

顺着《忘物志》的标题，还有两处引申而出的细枝末节。一来，如此典型而极简的白盒子空间，加之以“物”的重提，让人自然地回溯到Michael Fried的《艺术与物性》(*Art and Objecthood*, 1967) [1]。Fried在非具象绘画和极简主义的作品中所看到的，正是与其形式似乎相悖的“物性”。从这一点来说，忘物与恋物的共谋有着其扎根于现代性的渊源。

二来，是展览标题中英译名之间微妙的差异：“忘物志”对应 “When We Become Us” (当我们成为我们)。忘记物，而我们成为我们；忘物存我——勿忘我。

Two more thoughts are derived from the title of *When We Become Us*. Firstly is the inevitability that such a classic and minimal white box with its emphasis on “objects” would remind us of Michael Fried’s *Art and Objecthood* (1967), in which Fried writes about the object-hood he sees in realist paintings, as well as minimalist works that seem to contradict their forms. Basing on this idea, the complicity of the forgetting and fetishizing of objects would seem to stem from their Modernist roots. Second is the delicate difference between the Chinese and English exhibition titles: Wang Wu Zhi - “To Forget All Else”, corresponding to When We Become Us. To forget all else and become one with ourselves; to be unified with the forgotten - “not to forget the self”.

顾虔凡是一位作者，生活和工作于纽约。  
Qianfan is a writer who works and lives in New York.

[1] <http://atc.berkeley.edu/201/readings/FriedObjcthd.pdf>

# Thierry Goldberg

## Sarah Faux: Seether

April 07, 2017 to May 07, 2017



Thierry Goldberg presents *Seether*, an exhibition of new paintings by Sarah Faux. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

In 1994, alt-rock band Veruca Salt released the song "Seether," a grungy anthem with the refrain "Can't fight the seether/ I can't see her till I'm foaming at the mouth." A seether, someone who's seething, lives inside the female lead singer. That inner self is seething like the tiny bubbles that creep up the edges of a pot of boiling milk. In this group of paintings, anger, lust, and desire bubble up over and over again.

"As a woman in a world that objectifies the female form, I'm thinking about the body as object and agent," says Faux. Scenes are often shown from a first-person perspective, and intimate relationships between figures exist in ambiguity, open to multiple interpretations and innuendo. The viscerally rendered surfaces, with painted grounds shifting underneath, serve to represent the familiar messiness of the bodies we inhabit.

While fragments of nude human forms appear amid amorphous shapes and flat expanses of color, they do so only tenuously, as outlines and certainties

recede into the background as quickly as they coalesced. The relationship between line drawing and color alludes to power plays in sexuality. Both stylistic forces maneuver for respective narrative or emotional dominance, conveying the complexity of desire and the full range of experience that exists in the dichotomy between pleasure and pain. Ultimately, the intentionally challenging ambiguity of Faux's compositions gives way to moments of intimacy, as the artist aims to evoke private, physical experiences.

Sarah Faux (b. 1986, Boston), currently lives and works in Brooklyn. She holds an MFA from Yale University, and a joint BA/BFA from Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design. Her first solo show was held at Stems Gallery (Brussels, BE) in 2016, and she has recently exhibited in group shows at Fredericks & Freiser (New York, NY), yours, mine & ours (New York, NY), ltd los angeles (Los Angeles, CA), Cuevas Tilleard (New York, NY), Edward Thorp Gallery (New York, NY). Her work has been written about in *Modern Painters*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Interview Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, and *Artsy*, among others.

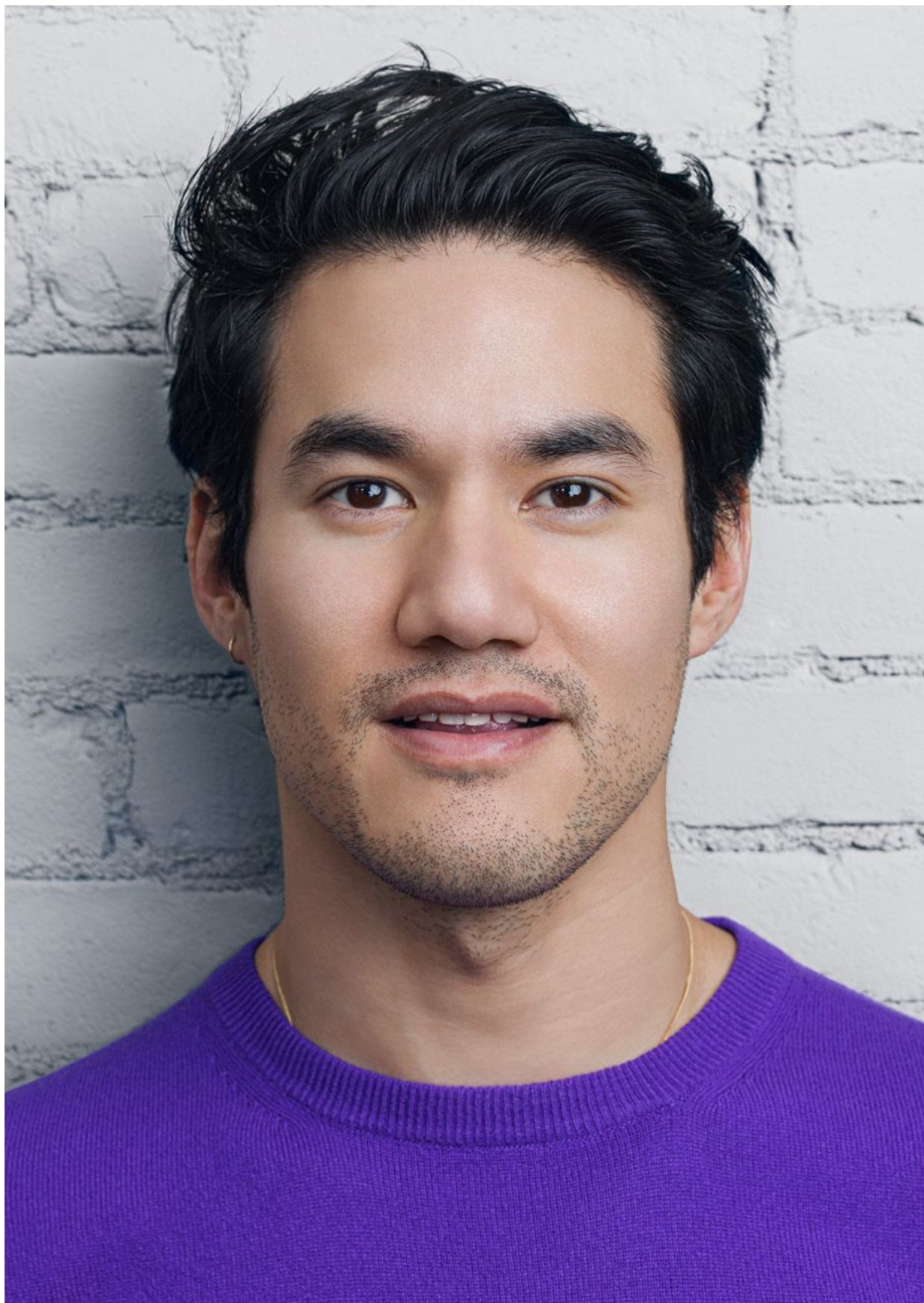


**JOSEPH ALTUZARRA**

**SURFACE**

ISSUE 126  
MARCH 2016

SPRING FASHION







## UP AND COMING Sarah Faux

At a cultural moment in which painting is on the ascendant, feminism is a buzzword, and provocation is the province of the Republican Party, it's hard to be a provocative feminist painter. It's even harder when, in an artistic landscape dominated by the conceptual and abstract, you embrace a retrograde semi-figuration that recalls the Bay Area Figurative School of the 1960s. Yet Queens-based, RISD- and Yale-educated artist Sarah Faux is quietly emerging as the Lena Dunham of fourth-wave feminist painting, foregrounding ambiguous, uncomfortably raw female bodies and embracing a sexuality more concerned with its own contradictions than the viewer's reaction. "As a woman in a world that objectifies the female form, I'm thinking about the body as object and agent," says the 29-year-old, her speech peppered with references to "gender binary bullshit" and Freud. "There's this dichotomy between the outside and the inside of the body, but there are also moments of intimacy when that separation breaks down, when your walls are penetrated."

Faux's paintings—flat expanses of color that resolve and dissolve into representation and abstraction—focus on the moment when that sense of bodily integrity becomes fragmented. Like a hipster Matisse, Faux bends disjointed bodies to fill the frame, straining society's limits with the viscera they would confine: female limbs, torsos, tongues. She eschews heads for naked breasts, probing fingers, and slick, hairy vulvas. "I had professors tell me my work was a meat market," she says. "No, I'm not going to put heads on bodies because bodies alone make you

uncomfortable," she would answer (and still answers now). "I'm trying to force the viewer into closer proximity and communion with, and acknowledgement of, the body."

Faux's bodies, as in traditional feminist art, critique the objectification of the female form while underscoring its vulnerability. (As a child, Faux was often ill: "I was very conscious of my body and that [it] was not always in synch with how I felt.") But that fragmentation doubles for the multiplicity of desire: Faux's most recent work depicts couples engaged in acts both violent and tender, their bodies splintering with polymorphous emotion. "Sexuality is complicated," Faux says. "Sometimes you have experiences that are alienating, sometimes you're in full union with another being; sometimes you're in your body, sometimes you're out of it. Sometimes you want pleasure, sometimes pain. I'm trying to express a fuller range of experience."

Painted from a slippery first-person point of view that could be both the subject's and the viewer's, the female form—beautiful and abject, the placid colors of an L.A. sunset belying the viscous paint and violent brush strokes—is no longer strictly subject or object, dominant or submissive, probed or probing, violated or exalted. In the invitingly pastel-hued "Untitled" (2015), for instance, phallic protuberances rise out of what could be the female reproductive system covered in menacing spiky hairs. In Faux's work the female body is content to be all things only to the person who matters most: herself. —Gabriella Fuller

PHOTOS: COURTESY SARAH FAUX



## **SARAH FAUX**

Jun 2nd – Jul 16th 2016

Brussels, 68, rue de la Concorde



### *Notes on Geminis:*

Geminis are known for their volatile temperaments. When I tell someone my sign, I get mixed reactions. Those who adore arguing or gossiping enjoy Gemini chattiness; others think of the twins as two-faced. While I'm not a devout believer in astrology, I have always identified with the idea that a single person contains multiple selves. Far from being willfully deceptive, Geminis personify innate human conflicts. A parent who raised you with every good intention might also pass on all their most oppressive habits. Your fondest memory of sun pouring through the window as you sip coffee with a lover could transform into a cavernous source of pain post- breakup. How we experience single moments in time can oscillate wildly physically and emotionally. Or maybe that's just the Gemini in me.



This show is full of pairs. “Torn at the shoulder” and “Into her inner” are mirrored reflections of each other. In one a woman looks back at her own naked body through scraps of fabric. In the other, her image is overwhelmed by a deep green field of desire. I could not have made one piece without the other, could not have depicted calm without anxiety or openness without impediments.

In a looser pairing, “Dig me in” and “Dig me out” derive their compositions from twisted aloe stalks winding through the surface of each canvas. Both are meditations on painting itself: a tongue lapping up gnarly gray to reveal intense ultramarine behind it; hairy legs shooting through pink gaps, leaving smears of umber in their wake. Like doppelgangers, the twins in this show harken back to each other in ways both familiar and strange, providing one another with company while eerily unsettling any static notions of sensory life.



# TWO COATS OF PAINT

January 27, 2014

## *Sarah Faux : Report from Yale*

4:00 pm by Sharon Butler

Guest Contributor [Sarah Faux](#) just completed her first semester in the [Yale MFA](#) program. She writes about the changes in her work and the diversity of approaches among the other students in the painting program. Image above: stacks of paintings lining the wall of her studio.

—

I've been thinking about Freud's idea of condensation: the notion that in a dream a person or object can stand in for many people or ideas simultaneously. A student in my psychoanalysis class asked if art is also a form of condensation. He speculated that art comes from our unconscious, and art, like a dream, might be neurosis manifested. I disagreed. Artists think of their audience, art history, intellectual history, many things beyond their own unconscious. But I don't disagree entirely. As every aspect of my work and my process has been dissected and discussed in studio visits and critiques, piece by piece, I've had to question what is primary in my work. While being in school hasn't changed my process or imagery in any dramatic ways (at least not yet), it has made me more aware of my deep motivations for making work. I look for forms



and colors that resonate on multiple levels in my conscious and unconscious mind, pregnant archetypal images that can express many things at once and, I hope, resonate with others. In this way, grad school has made me want more from my paintings – not necessarily to make them more complex or detailed, but just richer, vibrating on more levels – color, material, form.

My paintings usually come from moments where the psyche becomes unstable, like looking at my own shadow or the out-of-body experience of feeling present in one's flesh and disembodied in one's mind. At school I'm learning to translate these personal, nebulous experiences into academic language: are my paintings about the figure or the body? (To me they are both.)

A big surprise about school is just how differently a class of twenty painters can think about painting. There are practices in the painting department alone that range from narrative

figuration to gestural abstraction, social/ political engagement to art-for-art's-sake. It's hard to pin down what the zeitgeist is here. Definitely liquidy, painterly painting in a room full of painters will usually please the crowd. But there are probably an equal number of conceptually driven painters in the program. And, of course, process work, video, installation—the whole gamut. We've had plenty of discussions about idea-driven, borderline-scientific art practices. And I've been surprised by new takes on the female body by women, embracing and tackling female sexuality head on. Engaging with work dissimilar to my own is thrilling. While pursuing my interest in specific modes of painting in New York, I didn't realize how I'd closed myself off to others. My paintings may go through a bit of awkward phase now, but hopefully it's one of opening back up, with condensation to come.

