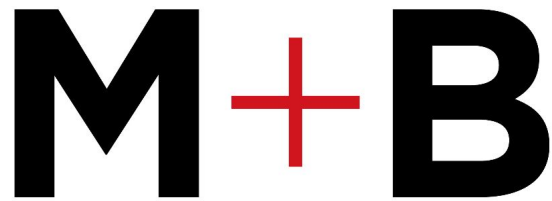


SARAH FAUX

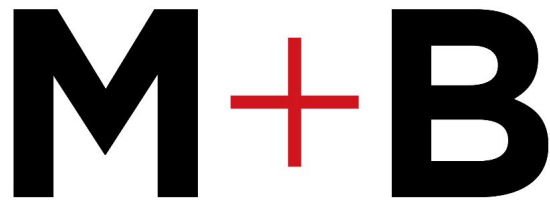
Press Pack



SARAH FAUX

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. 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.

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.



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

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

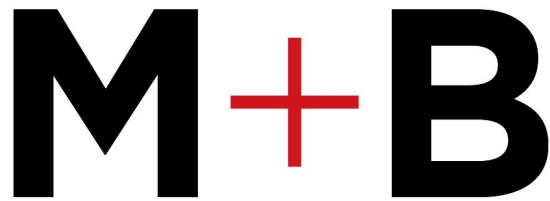
2019 *A Seed's a Star*, curated by Constance Tenvik, Loyal Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden
Pleasure in Precariousness, Thomas Erben Gallery, New York, NY
Attached, New York Studio School, New York, NY
Bed, curated by David Humphrey and Kate Javens, Marcia Wood Gallery, Atlanta, GA
Awaken, curated by Eileen 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

M+B

- 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 Franksteins, 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
Bruceennial 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

- 2019 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

M+B

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

- 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

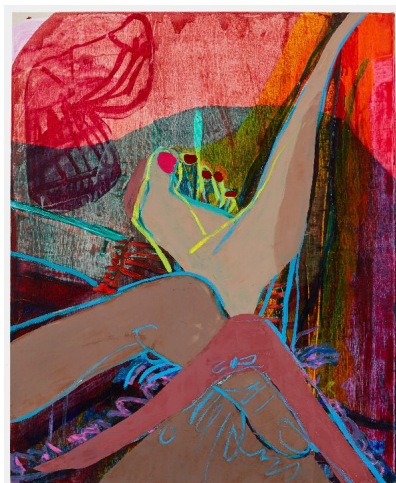
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SARAH FAUX *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.

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).

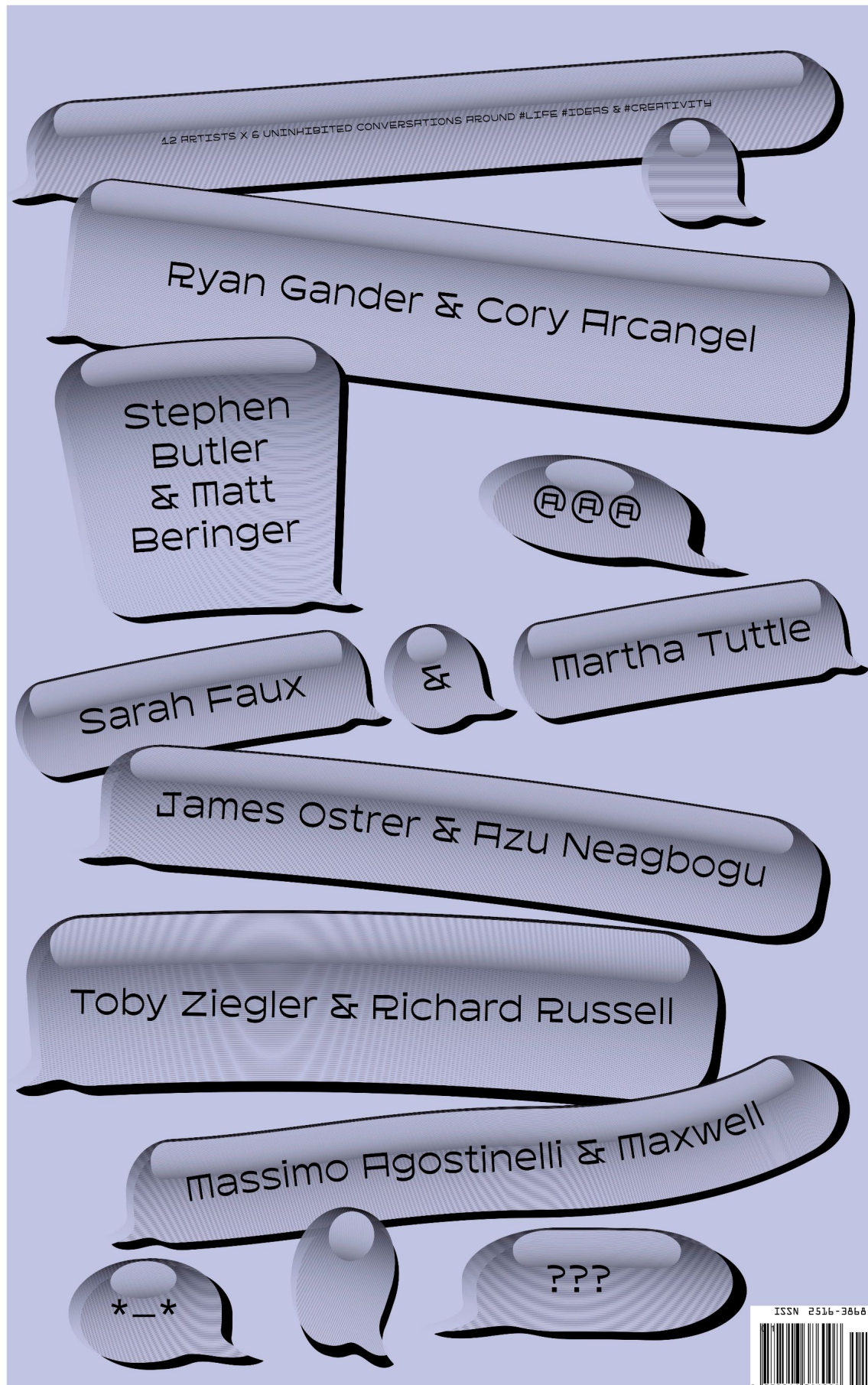


Faux's paintings are seriously sexy, not because they show bits of naked people, but because they do so in order to get at what James called naked sensation. She makes us intimate with color and facture. In *Tinges*, which I suspect has learned some of its fluency and immediacy from the monotypes, we 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

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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.

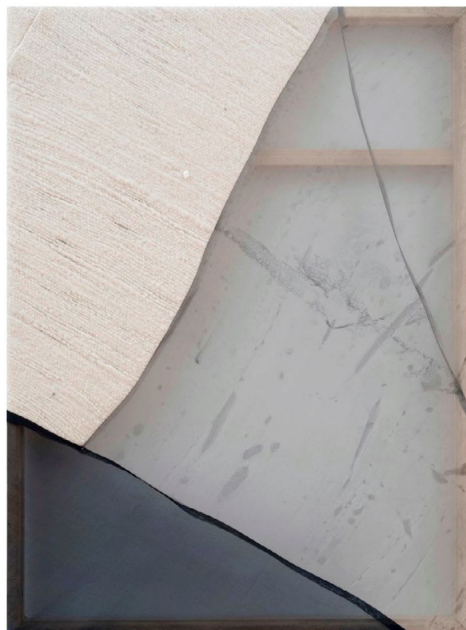
ter from one into other matter, through fear of running away from Apollo, turning into a tree or through the anger of competition, Athena turning Ariadne into a spider. That idea that one thing goes into something else by sensation, emotion, sensorial experience feels very related to your work. But also 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-

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.

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

ing. Do you see that as connected or?
 MT: That's such an interesting thing to say - yeah, yeah, I totally see it as connected. Because as an EMT it's coming into a person in an extreme situation and not knowing anything about them other than what their body needs at that one moment and in that split moment thinking about how you can help them alleviate stress or pain. I'm interested in medicine in general. I think way that ness is inter- to me, the ness hav- as- what's on with one you only this one ment- like can I do this one that we emer- cy sit- tion? of it

Erotic closeness becomes defined for me as a kind of intimacy of spirit. That's what gets really interesting.

SF: Pain is so ambiguous. I'm doing physical therapy right now because I injured my back and the doctor asked what level is your pain, and I'm like, I don't know, like a 7? I don't know, what level is other people's pain? And then you don't remember exactly how pain felt afterwards.

MT: What we learned in our EMT training is that that pain scale is only relevant in thinking about the individual. If we have these 20 minutes together, I can say Sarah what's your pain? And you say seven, and then I asked you in 20 minutes and you say nine, then I understand that you're getting worse. But yeah, as you say one person's seven is another person's three. It's totally a vast scale but I think that's also really beautiful in a way it's this universal measuring device that actually is only relevant when it's related to a one person.

SF: Yeah. That was the thing I was going to ask you about. I was thinking about the work that you made a few years ago at the end of school and the way that you were connecting things to each other with a tube, like the material choice was literally connected to medicine and the body in that work, and I was just wondering if you think about physical pain within the work you're making now.

MT: That's a big question. It's a very important question. Just quickly, I went to the Bronx Botanical Garden yesterday with Brook, and I saw the orchids and there were these really elaborate tubing systems to get them water. They were spread out. That was so beautiful to me and I guess a tube obviously is something that moves liquid from one place to another and that is a medical device, but it's also ---

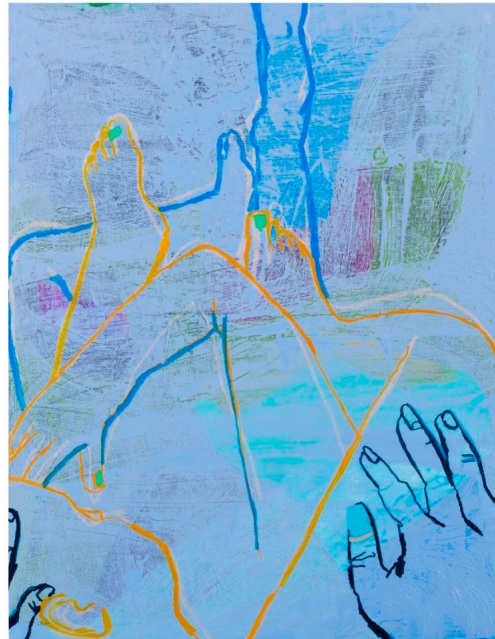
SF: I mean maybe I'm projecting something into it --

MT: No no, I mean, one of the most important books for me is *The Body in Pain* by Elaine Scarry, um, which we've talked about. I mean, I guess the most direct question that I'm interested in answering is what happens when you're in extreme pain? and I think it's related to meditation in that you can -- you switch into this singular focus. That's really interesting to me, also that pain transcends. It's purely

experiential. It's such a primal experience. I think often I go out through the day and don't remember that I'm a physical be-

but in a quick- really esting Also quick- of ing to sess going some- and if have mo- what for you in moment have in this gen- ua- Then course gets very prac- tically broken down. Like if your heart is in spasm, then you can shock it, which is extreme and whatever, or more mundanely if you skin your knee then I can give you a band aid. But in both situations it is the act of coming at something, knowing so little and just taking the information that a body is telling you that, a pain is telling you, and reacting to it. I feel like that was extremely informative.

SF: The question was about pain? Yeah, I mean, I guess in my own work, there's always a fractured sense of reality and the reality of being in a body. Not everybody feels fractured in their day to day. I think some people feel really whole all the time. But I don't, and I don't mind feeling fractured - I like the way that I experience the world. It's interesting to me.



I think it comes from when I was a kid having health issues and then I had surgery when I was young so -- like my body was a porous thing that somebody cut and sewed again when I was really little and very impressionable. And there's something in that that then has shaped the way that I experience body awareness -- maybe having some kind of awareness from an early age that you have organs --

MT: And then when you think about your kidney, you imagine a kidney in a textbook rather than this thing you're extremely intimate with.

SF: Yeah. But I never make paintings that are about physical pain.

MT: But it's interesting when the body is the subject matter in an artwork or -- I don't mean to speak for you but just that what happens to my body becomes like 'interesting' instead of this other thing. When I feel pain. It's like, on that's so interesting.

SF: Yeah when I'm going to physical therapy I think: "this is very interesting" and also it's mildly erotic. Feeling my body move in a new way.

MT: Yeah. I have been getting acupuncture and it really affects me. I know for some people it doesn't affect them at all. And whether it was psychosomatic from me or not -- but this idea of like energy points -- I got treated for cold and right after I shot up with fever and was sick and then it went away.

SF: The one time I got acupuncture for back pain and it didn't cure my back pain, but

it released this torrent of emotion that was so intense. I was super dis- oriented. I was in Bos- ton and went to my mom's acupunc- turists in the suburbs and then driving back to her house I got lost and was crying and just couldn't handle my shit at all and it was because of the acupuncture

SF: But in talking about distance and things that aren't touchable, do you think there's something weird about the fact that we can't touch our organs. Know what I mean?

MT: Yeah. Well, you're touching them all the time, but what is actually --- that was the question I have for you, well, what is touch? Do you think about training your touch and if so, how do you do?

SF: So within paintings?

MT: I guess however you want to answer that question.

SF: Yeah. I mean I think I've been really into this absorbent ground that Dan helped me develop, every- thing gets absorbed really quickly and I feel like the surface that I'm working on is more responsive than other surfaces -- because a regular gesso you could wipe it off and it'd be like you'd never touched it at all. But this surface -- you can't get rid of your touch, you touch it and then it's there.

MT: Well I guess just in talking about how we don't think that we touch our organs, it's hard to feel intimate with the insides of your body. Touch and sight are so connected for us that it's hard for us to feel like we're touching things that we don't see. That feels very related to both of our work and why it needs to be a visual experience.

SF: Is there something like really specific that you're thinking about?

MT: Um, I think I experience touch in my work as a physical sen- sation more than I would in a daily sense. And that's kind of why I would look at a painting -- to have something more than I could experience on a day to day sensorial level.

SF: Yeah. I mean I guess there's the idea of mirror touch and that when you're painting or when you're looking at a painting, your eye follows the way that the mark was made. So even if you don't quite understand how the mark was made, you're still, kind of following the trajectory of moving up and down or things dripping. There's a feeling of gravity and movement and weight and that you are simultaneously experiencing that sensation. Sort of like if you had a dream and like you can't fly, but you sort of know what it feels like. I feel like that about painting sometimes. If I'm looking at a painting and the visceral way that it's been touched, there's a sort of simultaneous re-experiencing.

MT: Does the state of mind that you're in affect the work you're making? If you're thinking about something or distracting, can you tell it when you look at the painting -- an actual moment?

SF: Oh, I have to be in a certain state of mind that's much more -- like I'll be listening to NPR all day and then when I actually have to paint I'll put on some kind of music that's really familiar to me. That's really comfortable. That evokes a weird nostalgia or an extreme joy. Do you feel like you have to be in a certain state of mind?

MT: Yeah. Well at the very least I feel like it shows like if I'm distracted it just feels tighter or looser. It's so affected by my body movements that if my muscles are tight because I'm stressing about something, it shows up in the work -- but I'm also so easily emotionally influenced that it's actually kind of easy to trick myself into being in the right mood with a particular song reading a passage --

SF: What are you listening to now? Like what music were you put on or is it mostly secret?

MT: I've been really obsessed with Alice Coltrane. What about you?

SF: 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

- 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



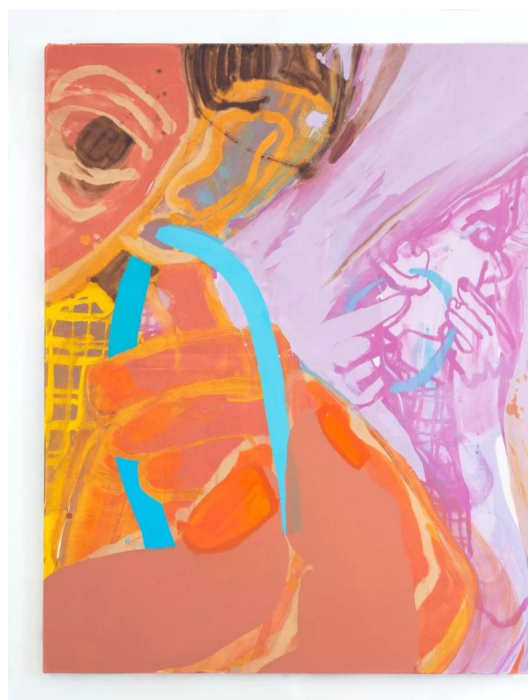
ARTSY | CHENG XINYI, HU ZI, SARAH FAUX – “FEMALE GAZE” UNDER MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

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.

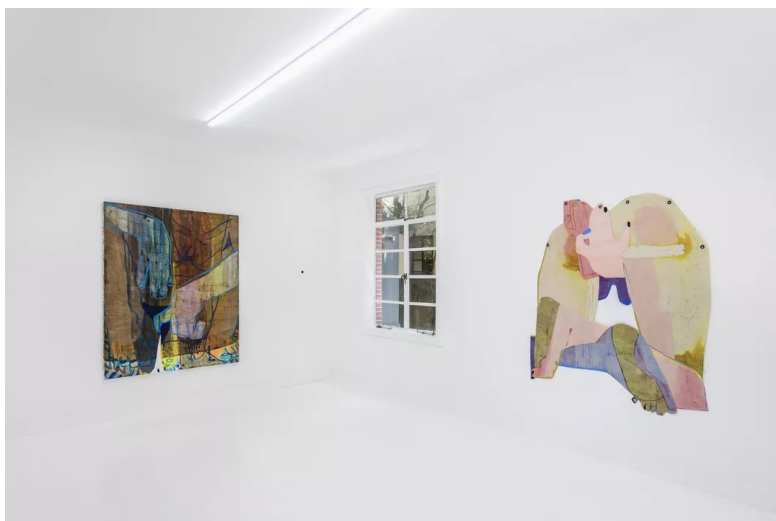
In her paintings, Faux dissects the body, zooming in on body parts. The skeleton is typically the frame of the canvas—or the external contours of the cloth collage. The oil paint poured onto the sketch of the body (coated with a strong water-absorbing primer) is immediately scraped off to create a flat “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.

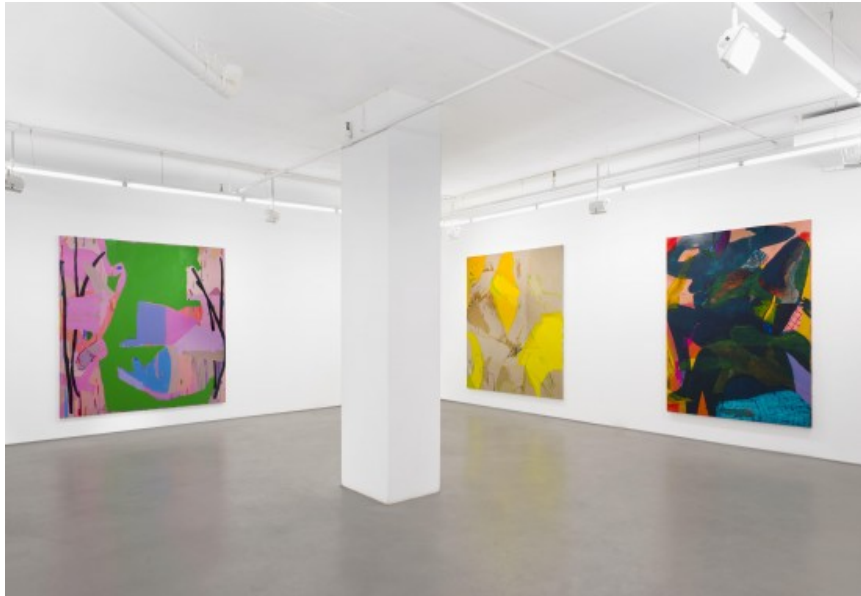
These parts might coalesce for a moment into the image of a hand pushing a blue comb through fleshy pink hair, only to break apart again the very next instant, like a quick glance in the mirror.

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

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 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.

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.



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

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.

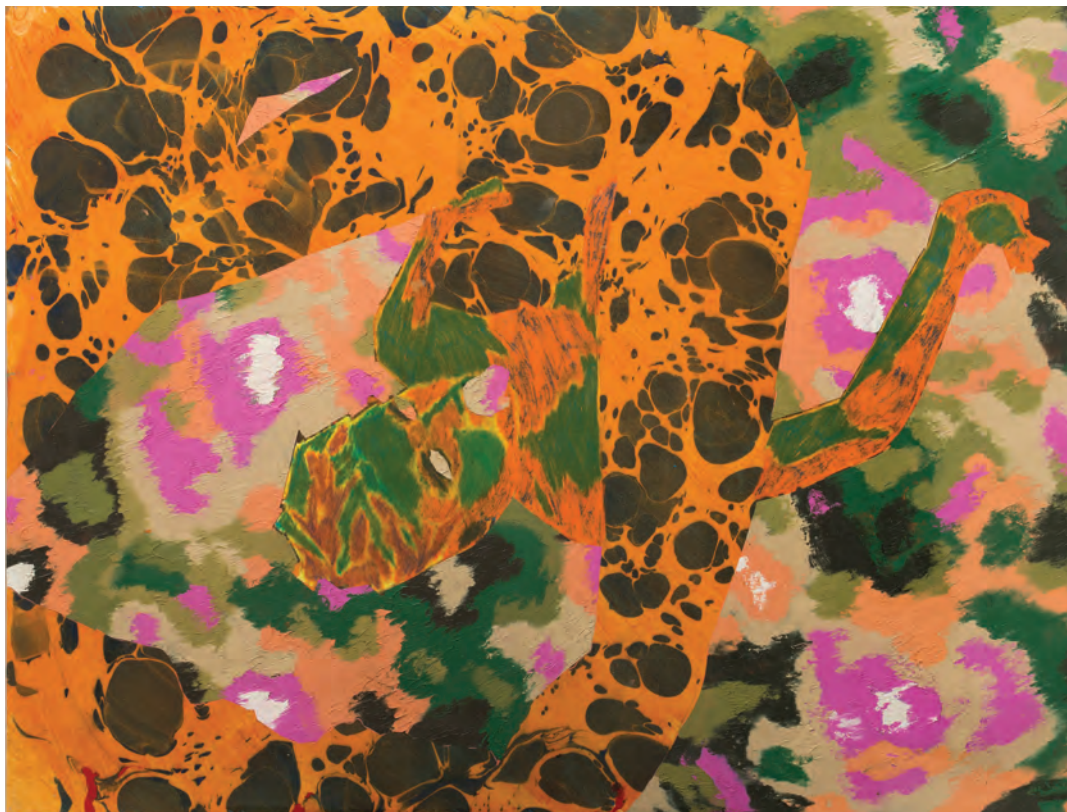
In the gallery's largest space, which over-looks an idyllic garden, painted canvases of reposing male figures by the Israeli-born American artist Doron Langberg adorn the pristine white walls. Each languid body offers up a sense of arresting vulnerability (enhanced by the paintings' vibrant hues) that 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

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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.

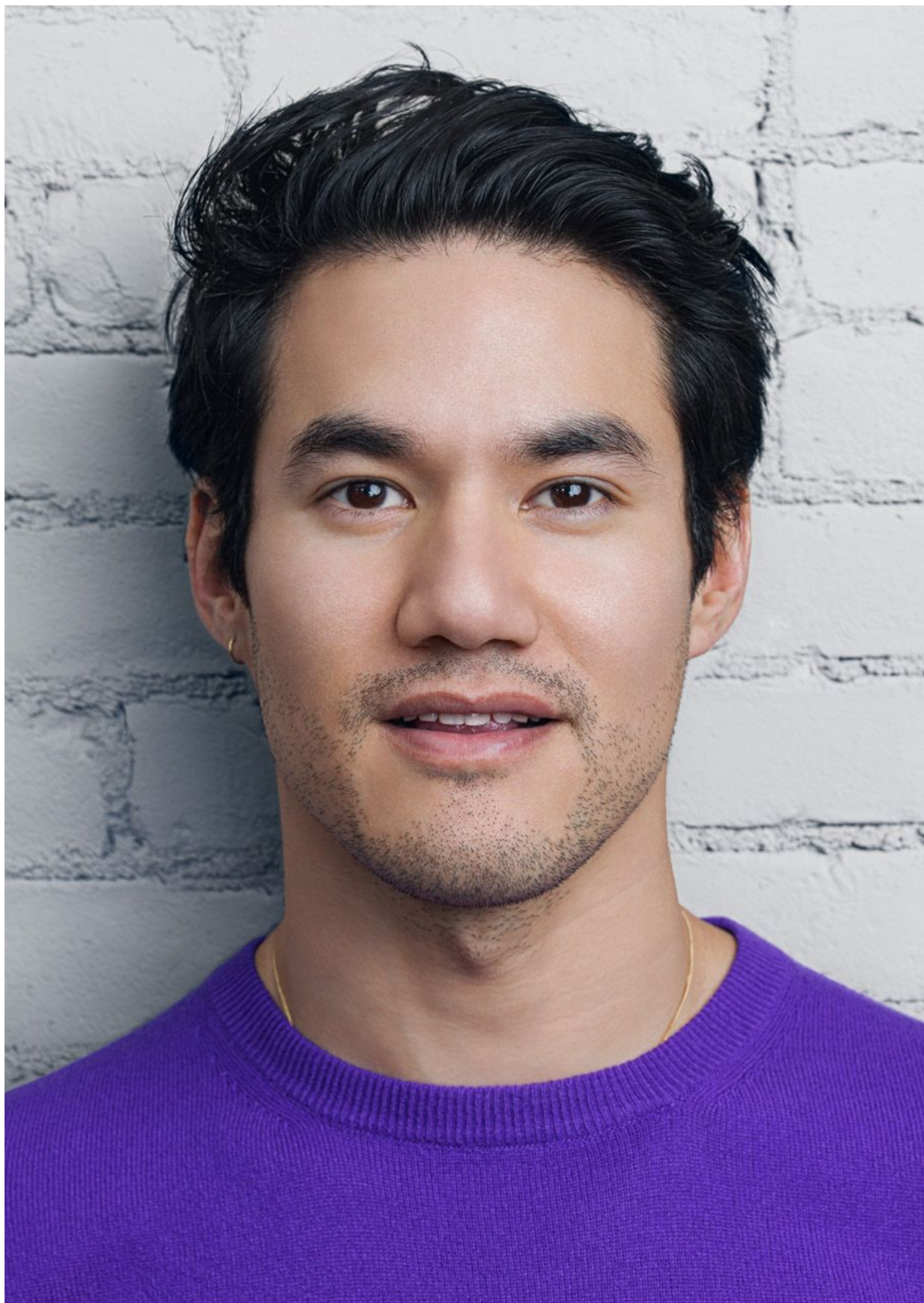
Sarah Faux (b. 1986, Boston), currently lives and works in Brooklyn. She holds an MFA from Yale University, and a joint BA/BFA from Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design. Her first solo show was held at Stems Gallery (Brussels, BE) in 2016, and she has recently exhibited in group shows 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.

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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.

