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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



SARAH FAUX *Whatever I see I swallow*

June 4 – July 10, 2021

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

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

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

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

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

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

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nestled in some cleft in *This Little Tribute*. The immediate reference to selfies is funny and an apt nod to desire as vernacular communication.

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

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

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

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

— Text by Gaby Collins-Fernandez, 2021

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

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

For all inquiries, please contact info@mbart.com.