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Sarah Crowner

October 29, 2020 - January 16, 2021

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce an exhibition of recent work by Sarah Crowner. The show, Crowner's third with the gallery, debuts a new series of large-scale paintings and will be on view from October 29, 2020 - January 16, 2021.

The paintings in the exhibition demonstrate Crowner's continually innovative approach to the medium and affinity for formal play. Each composition is made using the unique methodology that has come to define her practice, whereby individual sections of canvas are cut from patterns, painted, and sewn back together. Often forms are recycled or repurposed in a collage-like process; patterns emerge from the negative shapes of older paintings, or an entire composition might be spliced and reimagined on the studio floor. In these new works, the artist expands her visual language through acute variations in scale and color, with an emphasis on secondary colors such as, bright violets, searing oranges and dense grassy green, creating an exuberant, polychromatic environment. Most of the canvases are two-toned, engaging a spatial play between foreground and background through only two contrasting hues, or using raw canvas. The application of acrylic paint in each composition varies from densely saturated swatches of canvas that appear dyed, to loose and familiar expressionist brushwork, to even lighter washes of color that recall the soak-stain technique of Helen Frankenthaler. Proficiently executed, with a keen focus on texture and surface, the artworks reveal the unlimited potential of a singular color.

Cohesively, the paintings in the exhibition do not follow a shared pattern, but rather each adhere to their own internal logic. Some compositions resemble the calculated, geometric repetition of hard-edge painting, design, or woodblock printing. Others are more biomorphic and bear incidental, studio-accrued markings, engaging histories of abstract expressionism, color field and process-based painting. These differing formal and referential qualities lend each painting a distinct character, as if actively asserting their individuality, fluctuating from buoyant, first light elation to elusive, nocturnal guile; the prudent rational of Apollo to the frenetic passions of Dionysus. Many maintain a feeling of transient motion, for instance the undulating tendrils of raw canvas in "Medúsa" (2020) that appear to slither across the canvas, like the mythological snakes cited in the painting's title. A similar gesticulation and dramaturgy is found in two, large-scale, horizontal panels: "Orange and Others" and "Night Painting with Verticals" (both 2020) that, installed together, create a panoramic effect. The individual compositions unfold bidirectionally, legible from stage left or stage right. Symmetry is suggested, but withheld as shapes are reproduced, spliced, contorted and cut off in their turbulent tumble across the canvas.

This atmosphere of movement assimilates Crowner's own physical and performative practice, whereby she shifts between the studio floor and the wall, deconstructing and rearranging canvas segments and allowing her compositions to settle intuitively within the picture plane. Through this process, each shape - repeated or unique - functions as an abstract building block that can be used to create new narratives. Culling inspiration from art history and the organic world, the works in the exhibition maintain a kinetic and fertile quality, rife with the lush hues of nature. With a masterful handling of surface, color and form, Crowner continues to challenge the constraints of material and embrace the endless possibilities of abstraction.

Sarah Crowner (b. 1974, Philadelphia, PA) lives and works in New York. Forthcoming exhibitions and projects include The Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico, Fall 2021 and a large-scale commission for the US Embassy of Honduras in 2022. Recent projects include participation in the 57th edition of the Carnegie International (2018); scenography and costume design for Jessica Lang's "Garden Blue" with the American Ballet Theater (2018); as well as the permanent site-specific installation at the Wright Restaurant at the Guggenheim Museum (2017.) In 2013 Crowner participated in a major survey exhibition on abstract painting at the Walker Art Center in MN and was included in the 2010 Whitney Biennial curated by Francesco Bonami and Gary Carrion-Murayari. Her work is held in the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, PA; and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA amongst others.