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Caroline Kent

Proclamations from the deep

September 9 - October 23, 2021

Casey Kaplan is pleased to present Caroline Kent: *Proclamations from the deep*, the artist's inaugural solo exhibition in New York, opening on September 9, 2021. The exhibition, comprised of paintings on canvas and sculpture, will traverse both public-facing galleries.

Caroline Kent's (b. 1975, Sterling, IL) abstract practice is guided by a recognizable, yet unnamable language. Signifying schematics, fragments of poetry and fictional text take shape through an intuitive approach to color and form that is declarative yet illegible. Combinations of bold markings and idiosyncratic shapes are culled from the artist's expansive archive of paintings on paper, begun in 2014. Symbol-like forms, cut from paper and wooden blocks, are merged and layered in a diaristic process that indexes moments past. Such improvisational relationships function as an aesthetic wordplay, wherein the geographies of forms signal multiple, indeterminate meanings.

The exhibition's title, *Proclamations from the deep*, alludes to the visual effects of a metaphysical site termed the *deep*. The *deep* seeks to complicate the relationship between form and ground. Kent renders territories that exist beyond conventional notions of geography (migration patterns), towards an uncharted locale where conditions are set for the creation of a new tongue. The limitations of language are stretched to create space for both silence and sound, shape and empty ground.

Expanding upon a previously established motif of two fictitious twin sisters, Victoria and Veronica, who communicate through art objects — their shared language predicated on intimacy and expressed through shorthand, Kent considers the setting in which each hidden exchange lingers. Vibrant forms acrobatically at play materialize on the black grounds of monumental paintings on unstretched canvas. Linguistic devices, such as abbreviations or quickly scrawled notes, are introduced with handwritten marks resembling cursive writing, as seen in "Night Emporium" (2021). Kent's swathes of thinly applied black paint create recessed spaces that act as enclaves containing singular, suspended shapes.

Kent further explores how meaning shifts within the process of translation by relocating her abstracted language to the muted surface of raw Belgian linen. In "A nod of the head / A glance over one's shoulder" (2021), independent forms appear increasingly deliberate, distilled in their placement. Accentuated by wooden sculptural elements, unembellished shapes are bookended within quotation marks or parenthesis, perhaps alluding to an abbreviation of a larger passage. Hieroglyphic in its execution, Kent's language is illegible, yet dependent on context and inflection.

"Untitled (Obelisk)" (2021), a freestanding totemic sculpture, stands singularly amidst the web of secret conversations that span the gallery walls. Shapes from nearby surfaces are thinly recessed into the wooden structure, manifested as impressions of a thought. Like punctuation, the sculpture serves as a caesura, a pause or break in music or verse. With each novel connection between sign and reader, the mystery of Kent's visual vocabulary offers a mutual space for intuitive interpretation, capturing the nuances of communication and the amorphousness of language itself.

Kent received a B.S. from Illinois State University (1998) and an M.F.A. from The University of Minnesota (2008). *Chicago Works: Caroline Kent*, a solo exhibition at the MCA Chicago organized by Jadine Collingwood, Assistant Curator, is currently on view through April 2022. Kent's work has been presented at institutions such as The Walker Art Center, MN; The DePaul Art Museum, Chicago; The California African American Museum, LA; The Flag Art Foundation, NY; The Suburban, Oak Park, IL; and the University Galleries of Illinois State University, where her current exhibition, *What the Stars Can't Tell Us*, is on view through December 16, 2021. Kent has received grants from The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, and The Jerome Foundation, and was selected as a 2020 awardee of the Artadia Foundation Chicago. Kent's work is included in the collections of the Walker Art Center, MN, The Art Institute of Chicago, IL, the New Orleans Museum of Art, LA, the Dallas Museum of Art, TX and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN, among others. Kent is an Assistant Professor of Painting at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. She lives and works in Chicago, IL.