

Pam Evelyn, *Spectacle of a wreck*
October 8 – November 19, 2021
Opening Friday, October 8, 11–7PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *Spectacle of a wreck*, Pam Evelyn's first solo exhibition at the gallery.

It was the great British archaeologist, Mortimer Wheeler, who wrote that archaeology was a science that "... must be lived, must be 'seasoned with humanity'." (Mortimer Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth* [1954]). Pam Evelyn paints like the archaeologist digs, (ad)ressing her abstract art in much the same way as Wheeler's archaeologist approaches their science. With a generosity for past paradigms but motivated by the spirit of discovery. Both execute their craft without any sense of premeditation, undertaking a process that abdicates any obligation or burden of schema - physical or intellectual - other than that dictated to them by the enigma of exploration and the resolve of revelation.

Evelyn's painterly excavation is not a formal concern but, rather, one driven by the mechanics of process. She's not digging in the pigments of time looking for amulets of previous civilisations; she's empowering her dig to such an extent that she lets it decree not just what but how she arrives at such aesthetic disclosures. She's not looking to catalogue the chaos of the past, but rather clasp and clutch it in a very physical, personal way. To feel the very drama of an excavation of such extravaganza. It is this very freedom from any edicts of representation that allows Evelyn the opportunity to dig deep into the texture of her craft and, in turn, explains the astonishing surfaces she consequently unearths. Canvases that vibrate with painterly joie-de-vivre, the like of which we haven't seen since *CoBrA*. One can't help but be reminded of Karel Appel's transmutation of innocence into experience (and back again) by Evelyn's joyous, animated surfaces, but now, somehow moulded into that haze of form and light typical of Leon Kossoff's practice. Both figurative painters who constantly resisted the Siren's call to abstraction yet both informing an abstract painter who neither denies nor sanctions any pursuit of subject or object.

Evelyn's intention is to take a journey in paint and have us follow her. She's not driven by destination but by experimentation. She's interested in the scaffolding of visual enterprise, not its architecture. Whilst numerous dialects of abstraction pool together in Evelyn's work, her paintings remain fresh and fecund, with each drip, macule, smear, and strake commingling to articulate her lexis of painterly possibility, beautifully scrambled into a myriad of cerebral, corporeal, and cognitive entanglements. It's that entanglement that fires up the engine of Evelyn's art and which provides the theatre in which she conducts her painterly spectacle of chaos. As Chuck Palahniuk wrote in his 1999 novel, *Invisible Monsters*, "Our real discoveries come from chaos, from going to the place that looks wrong and stupid and foolish." Evelyn goes there - unafraid, unabashed - presenting rather than representing in paint. Searching rather than concluding. Her art, an act of Performance, is sometimes spontaneous; sometimes immediate; sometimes arduous; sometimes deliberate.

Each of the painting's titles in the exhibition give whiffs of this performative quest in and with paint. There's *Below* and *Inside*. Single words that expand immediately as tapestries of indexical potential. Below what? Inside where? There's *Breach in Wall* and *In An Outdoor Space*. Both seemingly prosaic as titles yet, just as with Evelyn's abstractions, they bob and weave into and over each other, forging an ever-reverberating grammar of Index with delicious results, once again mirroring the artist's own approach to her process. These titles also evince a real physicality - the sensation of crunched leaves underfoot, witnessing sunset storms, peering through transgressed façades into secret gardens - which Evelyn has referred to in the past as 'mist rising'. Evaporations and condensations of space and forms that incubate and inchoate mercury-memories of slippery movement, material and meaning. Up, down, in, out, through and all simultaneously.

The act is the art thus becoming a kind of mantra for both the artist and the viewer. We see this in the way Evelyn adumbrates tension or suggests urgency across her surfaces, which tightens, and releases like an ambitious bicep across her canvases in blossoms of colour, dollops of depth, and sexy sashays of line. Her brush seems to never sit still; always moving, always looking, always digging away. Evelyn's gesture - as robust and flexible as it is - doesn't attempt any sense of masquerade or even try to personify, *per se*. Gesture, here, comes from somewhere deep and dark within the artist. Her adventure at the command of her venture, doing exactly what it wants, like one's id at the edge of the cliff, ready to take you by the hand and jump into the unknown; pushing in, through and out of any desire for depiction or commitment to structure. Evelyn unveils ululations of paint; their mood of celebration, reverence or even sorrow made manifest in large, juicy planes of mottled colour - some largo, some adagio - that are enlivened and tortured and comforted by a sinewy, serpentine line ever-crawling throughout Evelyn's 'scapes like a slug leaves its iridescent trail behind them.

Matt Carey-Williams
Sandy Lane, Wiltshire
September 2021

PERES PROJECTS

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Pam Evelyn (b. 1996, Guildford, UK) lives and works in London. She holds a BFA from the Slade School of Fine Art and is currently studying Fine Art Painting at The Royal College of Art, London. Recent exhibitions include Baert Gallery, Los Angeles, Exhibition Laboratory, Helsinki, Althuis Hofland Fine Arts, Amsterdam, The Crypt Gallery, London and The Approach Gallery, London.

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Please note that attendance will be subject to all local COVID-19 related requirements at that time. We will publish updated info prior to the event.