

Emily Ludwig Shaffer

*In Stead of Me*

November 18, 2022 – January 6, 2023

Opening Friday, November 18, 6–8PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *In Stead of Me*, Emily Ludwig Shaffer's (b. 1988 in San Francisco, US) first solo exhibition at the Berlin gallery.

To act in someone's stead is to hold or stand in their place. It is a phrase tied to both absence and locality. The title *In Stead of Me* speaks to the dualities and contradictions in Shaffer's works. The artist gestures to intimated but non-present figures through various motifs in her work: the empty chairs in *Flowers to Share* (2022), the child in the mother's womb in *City of Lady* (2022), and the shadow figure in *Nurse Log* (2022). The title also alludes to how paintings can stand in for the artist's state of being. Shaffer describes this exhibition – which is her first solo since becoming a mother – as having come together in an intuitive and organic way. These are a series of loose vignettes and spaces that have inspired or grounded her in a year of constant change.

The works are split into two groups: compositions that take the city as their subject and the garden spaces that the artist continues to explore. Despite these categories, it is not always easily discernible which paintings belong to which. Shaffer leaves the viewer to disentangle them, with her depictions of interior space that often bleed into forest scenes, and cityscapes with tree root systems that reach as deep as the city's foundations. There is an underlying feeling of friction in her works that is an outcome of her staging of contrasting elements, for which Shaffer provides escape routes through the form of windows and doors.

These windows, stairs and doors provide paths for the viewer to traverse across, portals that allow the eye space to rest or lead us into the next work. These frames are reinforced by site-specific murals through which Shaffer incorporates the socialist architecture of the gallery space into her pictorial world. The murals provide a break in the white landscape of the gallery; by bringing its walls into the color family of the paintings and rendering certain motifs at human scale, the metaphorical space is shifted into the real and the viewer invited to step in.

*Sashay This Way* (2022), *City of Lady* (2022), and *Deep Foundations and High Walls* (2022) draw inspiration from Christine de Pizan's pivotal literary work *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405). A proto-feminist, de Pizan assembles a counter-history of important women for which she constructs a home in her "City". This city-planning shares characteristics with Shaffer's own craft, in which feminized towns and worlds are constructed, not with words, but with paint. The historical women in the "City of Ladies" become the pillars that uphold not only the author's argument, but the buildings in the city too. In Shaffer's paintings, however, the stone statues wander off down the streets, inhabiting the spaces that they were meant to support or decorate.

In *Nurse Log* (2022), two stone women sit on pedestals in frozen reverence for a shadowy, sunken form, referencing the symbiotic process of dead trees becoming the fertile ground for new life. In this work, Shaffer reflects on how statues and memorials shape the ways we encounter our histories, and how our built environments carry on the legacy of our past. Like Christine de Pizan and other women artists and writers before her, the artist continues a tradition of building feminized spaces. *In Stead of Me* assembles a visual lexicon that feels like a steady thread within ever-shifting environments, one that reflects on the many ways women can create space for new life and ideas.

This is Emily Ludwig Shaffer's first solo exhibition with Peres Projects. In 2018, Shaffer had her debut solo exhibition *Stone Tapestry* at PACT in Paris. Since then, she has had solo exhibitions *From The Ha-Ha Wall Comes The No-No Dance* at Institute 193 in Lexington, US, *Wall-To-Wall* at PACT in Paris, and *An Island Refrain* at Dio Horia in Mykonos. In addition, Shaffer has participated in numerous group exhibitions including *Contemporary Domesticity*, Taymour Grahne Projects, London, *Good Pictures*, curated by Austin Lee, Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, New York, *Imagining Reality*, Future Gallery, Berlin, *Nostos*, Matthew Brown, Los Angeles, *No Place*, L'Inconnue, Montreal, *In Response: The Arcades*, The Jewish Museum, New York, *Skins*, Ellis King, Dublin, and *what fruits it bears*, Peres Projects, Berlin. In 2021, she had a duo exhibition with Françoise Grossen at L'Inconnue in New York.

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