

Press Release

Christina Quarles. In 24 Days tha Sun'll Set at 7pm

8 September – 29 October 2022

Hauser & Wirth New York, 22nd Street



New York...Following the presentation of her work at this year's Venice Biennale, and ahead of her inclusion in the 16th edition of the Biennale de Lyon this fall, Christina Quarles will unveil a series of new paintings in her first major solo exhibition in New York with Hauser & Wirth. Many of the works on view were created during the artist's 2022 residency at the gallery's Somerset location and draw inspiration from the surrounding English countryside. Here, Quarles has incorporated many unique elements from the natural world within her signature patterns and textures, achieving a new degree of spatial openness that expands upon her instinctual approach to figuration and richly layered visual vocabulary.

Known for the fragmented and polymorphous bodies that animate her critically acclaimed canvases, Quarles's fascination with expressing corporeality and its many complexities first took hold in a figure drawing class when she was twelve years old. Since then, she has pursued the subject of the body, developing an introspective and innovative painting practice rooted in drawing. Quarles continues to attend life drawing classes whenever possible and did so most recently during her residency in Somerset. This approach to regularly observing different types of bodies anew while honing her skills has enabled the artist to push past the limits of anatomical legibility. Visualizing what it feels like to live within a body while grappling with an excess of identities, she approaches the canvas with no predetermined composition, letting entangled arms and legs emerge spontaneously from memory, imagination, and improvisation.

The exhibition's title, 'In 24 Days tha Sun'll Set at 7pm,' refers to the time frame in which Quarles produced these paintings. Spanning the early months of 2022 through the final weeks of Summer, this body of work reflects the artist's waxing and waning optimism across a tumultuous and transformative year. Much like the days whose light increases and decreases on either side of the seasons, the year began with growing potential for communal healing and social upheaval, yet it seems to be ending on a more tentative note.



These contemplations manifest in the scale of Quarles's new paintings, particularly works like 'Same Shit, Diff'rent Day.' Here figures contract, slouch, and transform with varying precarity across patterns and planes whose legibility shifts in space. Likewise, 'A Song For YOu' broaches physical scale with gestures that are fixed by the limits of Quarles's reach. Brilliant brushwork and an abundance of colors and textures expand her gestural line drawings as different painting techniques move across multiple figures in a single work. Vibrant magentas, blues, greens, and yellows serve not as a means of describing reality but as a way of actively resisting the viewer's instinct to assign binary classifications like male or female, white or black, abstract or representational, to the figures. An array of recognizable patterns—from a jewel-toned, cloud-filled sky to a floral tapestry—contain and divide Quarles's painted forms, reflecting her own feelings about living in a body that resists simple or immediate classification.

The artist has said that "the contradiction of my Black ancestry coupled with my fair skin results in my place always being my displace. Throughout my paintings, there are perspectival planes that both situate and fragment the bodies they bisect—location becomes dislocation. Fixed categories of identity can be used to marginalize but, paradoxically, can be used by the marginalized to gain visibility and political power. This paradox is the central focus of my practice." Constrained only by the boundaries of the canvas and the painted patterns within that physical frame, the figures in Quarles's new paintings straddle interior and exterior worlds. A visual analogy for the push and pull between our public and private selves and inner and outer voices, the work calls attention to society's constructs around identity, and the potential for excess and expanse where limitations were once prescribed.

About the Artist

Christina Quarles (b. 1985) is a Los Angeles-based artist, whose practice works to dismantle assumptions and ingrained beliefs surrounding identity and the human figure. Born in Chicago and raised by her mother in Los Angeles, Quarles took art classes from an early age. She developed a solid foundation for a lifelong drawing practice through after-school programs and figure drawing classes at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts.

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In 2007, Quarles graduated from Hampshire College with dual BA degrees in Philosophy and Studio Art, then trained and worked in the field of graphic design. As her immersion in the visual arts progressed, she became well versed in and heavily influenced by Marlene Dumas, Leonora Carrington, Jack Whitten, David Hockney, and Philip Guston. Seeking a vehicle for expressing the feelings and experiences language alone cannot articulate, Quarles went on to attend Yale University, where she received her MFA in 2016. She participated in an intensive artist residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture that same year.

Quarles has been the recipient of several awards and grants. She was the inaugural recipient of the 2019 Pérez Art Museum Miami Prize, in 2017 she received the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant, and in 2015 she received the Robert Schoelkopf Fellowship at Yale University and participated in the Fountainhead Residency in 2017. Quarles's work is currently featured in 'The Milk of Dreams,' the 59th International Art Exhibition at La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Cecilia Alemani and will be included in 'manifesto of fragility,' the main exhibition of the 16th Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art, curated by Sam Bardaouil and Till Fellrath, this October.

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Caption and courtesy information:

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Christina Quarles

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Same Shit, Diff'rent Day

2022

Acrylic on canvas

177.8 x 330.2 x 5.1 cm / 70 x 130 x 2 in

Photo: Thomas Barratt

A Song for You

2022

Acrylic on canvas

195.6 x 218.4 x 5.1 cm / 77 x 86 x 2 in

Photo: Thomas Barratt

Caught Up

2021

Acrylic on canvas

213.4 x 182.9 x 5.1 cm / 84 x 72 x 2 in

Photo: Fredrik Nilsen



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