

Herald St

Lesley Vance

9th October - 19th November 2022

For her exhibition at Herald St, Lesley Vance has made a suite of new paintings ranging from luminous watercolours to an immersive large-scale canvas with robust sweeping forms. The works are self-contained and their subjects centralised; as she puts it, they are 'paintings of a thing'. They present crisp, vegetal patterns alongside sensuous and bodily outlines, and areas of flat colour which collide with striations redolent of the spines of a shell or the fur of an animal. One painting depicts fleshy, embryonic bulbs enveloped and connected through a network of grey ribbon, another covers lounging aubergine passages with shredded leafy layers.

While no two paintings ever begin the same way, Vance always starts with a concrete subject which remains unknown to the viewer. Studying the marbled and meandering pools of colour remaining at this stage, the artist guides the painting into being, steadily adding definition to her initial burst of gesture and working at a pace to crystallise the composition while the oil is wet enough to manipulate. Upending the traditional speeds inherent to each medium, Vance is able to linger over her watercolours, using a less absorbent ground which allows the liquid to sit atop it for longer. Time endures in her paintings, as if she has paused them; as the artist states, 'They had a life before, and they'll have a life after.'

When conceiving the present body of work, Vance kept returning to the idea of circulation: 'I don't let you out of the painting, everything comes back into the painting'. She compares her compositions to the Mobius strip or Klein bottle, topological phenomena with no distinct boundaries, beginnings, or ends. The artist works in opposites, building volume into a two-dimensional surface and confounding layers of painterly swirls and flat planes with shadows. Her paintings emanate from her process; action and movement are entangled in the final, still image. The artist enfolds these playful tensions into her work, resulting in windows of quiet visual drama.

Vance's touchstones range from the clamouring colours of Elizabeth Murray and the otherworldly vegetation imagined by Anna Zemánková to Georgia O'Keeffe's series of pelvis bones. Like O'Keeffe's bones or Zemánková's flowers, Vance's work embraces the mystical perfection of nature, as encapsulated in the helical chambers of a shell tossed in the ocean until it achieves exact symmetry or in the precision of a flower petal's geometry. Singular and contained, and pulsating through time and movement, Vance's paintings teem with life and energy.

Text by Émilie Streiff

Lesley Vance (b. 1977, Milwaukee) lives and works in Los Angeles. Her work is currently included in *Put It This Way: (Re)Visions of the Hirshhorn Collection* at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC. Later this year, she will feature in a group show at Mu.ZEE in Ostend, Belgium, and in 2023, she will have a solo show at the Columbus Museum of Art. She has had solo exhibitions at the FLAG Art Foundation, New York; Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, and The Huntington Library, San Marino (with Ricky Swallow). Recent group exhibitions include *WE PAINT!*, Beaux-Arts de Paris (2022); *Aftereffect: Georgia O'Keeffe and Contemporary Painting*, MCA Denver (2019); *The Campaign for Art*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2016); and *Don't Shoot the Painter*, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan (2015). Her paintings are included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, amongst others.

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Front Space

Untitled
2022
Oil on linen
91.4 x 71.1 x 2.5 cm / 36 x 28 x 1 in
HS18-LV8017P

Back Space

(Anti-clockwise)

Untitled
2022
Watercolour on paper
66 x 50.8 cm / 26 x 20 in, unframed
70.5 x 55.3 x 3.2 cm / 27.8 x 21.8 x 1.3 in, framed
HS18-LV8047P

Untitled
2022
Watercolour on paper
66 x 50.8 cm / 26 x 20 in, unframed
70.5 x 55.3 x 3.2 cm / 27.8 x 21.8 x 1.3 in, framed
HS18-LV8014P

Untitled
2022
Oil on linen
203.2 x 170.2 x 3.8 cm / 80 x 67 x 1.5 in
HS18-LV8016P

Untitled
2022
Oil on linen
48.3 x 58.4 x 2.5 cm / 19 x 23 x 1 in
HS18-LV8018P

Untitled
2022
Oil on linen
48.3 x 58.4 x 2.5 cm / 19 x 23 x 1 in
HS18-LV8019P