

Herald St

A Gauzy Flame

Yage Guo
Esteban Jefferson
Poppy Jones
Cole Lu
Paula Siebra

1st March - 15th April 2023

Herald St is pleased to present *A Gauzy Flame*, featuring new works by Yage Guo, Esteban Jefferson, Poppy Jones, Cole Lu, and Paula Siebra. United by a muted colour palette, the pieces on view tell stories of myths and monuments, flashes of beauty in domestic settings, and memories of heat. The exhibition, titled after a lyrical and sensory fragment by Sappho, will take place in the gallery's East London premises and marks the Herald St debut for all included artists. Hailing from London, New York, rural Sussex, and northern Brazil, they question historic tenets of painting, offering fresh plays on traditional subjects and mediums. Blurry and burning, fleeting and timeless, the works in *A Gauzy Flame* radiate with a hazy, emotive power.

Among the dusky tableaux are mythical scenes which embody a contemporary poignancy. In Cole Lu's works, dense foliage, a menagerie of animals, Classical architecture, and phenomena such as explosive sparks and floating voids are intricately burnt onto wood and linen. Lu's reliefs continue an epic narrative, partly autobiographical and partly derived from the Ancient Greek sagas of Geryon and Hypnos. Lu offers personal and sympathetic interpretations of these gods and monsters, questioning the roles of hero and villain and channelling his own traumas through the Archaic figures. The laborious and meditative repetition of marking the surfaces carries its own catharsis, and the works' poetic titles invite a deeper immersion into each protagonist's journey.

Yage Guo's paintings also find inspiration in legends and literature. In her recent output, she depicts scenes steeped in melancholy from medieval tales of heraldry and novels such as Albert Camus' *L'étranger*. Androgynous figures emerge in incandescent silhouettes cast against jet black grounds, seemingly lost in thought. Guo's work is characterised by an ethereality, portraying visions which are at once softly blurred and sharply focused. Set within romantic backdrops of stained-glass windows and fields of forget-me-nots, her new paintings are imbued with an oneiric and palpable atmosphere. Like Lu, Guo inserts her own emotions into her work, charging them with ephemeral memories.

In other parts of the exhibition, the mystical is found in the everyday. Poppy Jones's window-like works show domestic items – a reading lamp, shirt buttons, a flower – fading into the soft suedes and jewel-toned cotton that constitute their supports. Each piece incorporates photography, lithography, and watercolour on found fabrics, including swatches from the artist's own clothing. Throughout her methodical process, she embraces fingerprint smudges and other such 'mistakes' which make their way into the surfaces. For *A Gauzy Flame* Jones has produced the largest piece of this series to date, introducing a seam running down the centre which further evidences the second-hand nature of the reused materials. Among these dimmed vignettes are sources of light: the glow of the reading lamp and satin sheen of the tulip petals revealing tender moments suffused with a quiet beauty.

Paula Siebra's *Vista de cima das falésias* (View from above the cliffs) offers another quotidian, set in the Ceará region of Brazil where she lives and works. Like Jones's works, this intimately scaled painting emanates calm, while its dusty tones radiate the heat of an altogether different clime. Siebra's practice centres on feelings of stillness, allotting the same importance to closely cropped arrangements of ordinary objects as she does to cliffs and landscapes. Bathed in the reds and oranges of dawns and dusks, her paintings nod to the folk art of her coastal surroundings as well as the works of Latin American masters such as Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato. *Vista de cima das falésias* exemplifies the warmth infused in her paintings, rendering an otherwise dramatic cloudscape with peaceful reverie and humility.

Esteban Jefferson's work highlights a different kind of reality. For the exhibition, he has contributed a diptych titled *May 29, 2020* which depicts bright scrawls of graffiti tags upon the ashen graphite outlines of an NYPD van, its front tyre flattened and lights ablaze. The painting carries an air of journalistic evidence, using two disjointed analogue photographs as its source, each neatly date stamped. *May 29, 2020* forms part of a recent series by the artist which tracks flash protests and the toppling of monuments in New York, following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer and subsequent global re-examination of racial and colonial history. Leaving much of the canvas raw and foregrounding charged details of urban chaos, the artist creates a small, unfinished memorial, a foil to the grand equestrian statues of American founding fathers in every way possible.

An awareness of time pervades throughout the exhibition. It manifests in the physical labour undergone on the surfaces, as melodically stated in a fragment from Lu's titles: *the hours jumped out of the clock, stood before him, demanding he work correctly*. It can also be read in the fleeting scenes in each work which seem to stretch infinitely. Referencing varying sources from canonical legends, current events, and vernacular snapshots, the paintings burn with memories of traumas, protests, and silences.

Text by Émilie Streiff

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Yage Guo (b.1998, Inner Mongolia; lives and works in London) completed both her BFA and MA at Slade School of Fine Art, London. She had a solo show at Slade School of Fine Art London, and has exhibited at 180 The Strand, London; PM/AM Gallery, London; and Fusion, Nottingham.

Esteban Jefferson (b.1989, New York; lives and works in New York) studied Visual Art at Columbia University. He has had solo shows at Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles; Tanya Leighton, Berlin; and White Columns, New York. He has also exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, and has an upcoming solo show at Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art, London.

Poppy Jones (b. 1985, London; lives and works in Bexhill-on-Sea) completed her MA at the Royal College of Art and has had solo shows at Overduin & Co, Los Angeles; Mai 36, Zurich; and Mrs. Gallery, Los Angeles. She has also exhibited at Fortnight Institute, New York; The Artist Room, London; and Gerald Moore Gallery, London.

Cole Lu (b.1984, Taipei; lives and works in Brooklyn) completed his MFA at Washington University in St. Louis. He has had solo shows at Chapter NY, New York; Nir Altman, Munich; POPPOSITIONS, Brussels; 77 Mulberry, New York; and Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis.

Paula Siebra (b. 1998, Fortaleza, Brazil; lives and works in Fortaleza) studies at Universidade Federal do Ceará, Fortaleza. She has had solo exhibitions at Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo; Nieuwe Gentwerd 21, Bruges; Mendes Wood DM, New York; and Fábrica Bhering, Rio de Janeiro.

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Front Space

(Clockwise from left)

Poppy Jones

Slow Fall

2023

Oil on suede, soldered aluminium frame

41.5 x 59 cm / 16.3 x 23.2 in

HS18-PJ8247P

Poppy Jones

Still Life

2023

Oil and watercolour on suede, soldered aluminium frame

43 x 30 cm / 16.9 x 11.8 in

HS18-PJ8246P

Poppy Jones

Another Light

2023

Oil and watercolour on cotton, soldered aluminium frame

25.5 x 19.5 cm / 10 x 7.7 in

HS18-PJ8248P

Paula Siebra

Vista de cima das falésias

2022

Oil on canvas

30 x 40 cm / 11.8 x 15.7 in

HS18-PS8157P

Cole Lu

Time was longer when October was the eighth month of the year, when everything was thicker, a year in three hundred and four days. Long days sunk into the earth inside him. He dug and dug until a trickle of music entered the forest from the trees. The vibration of timber encircled him, guiding his hand to guide his hand to sleep. (Gate)

2023

Burnt birch

40.6 x 50.8 x 3.8 cm / 16 x 20 x 1.5 in

HS18-CL8204P

Back Space

(Clockwise from left)

Cole Lu

While it lives in him, he imagines his scapular spines as small fishing boats at anchor in the river. The vertical border governs his understanding of migration. He repeats the word sleep three times as if he were starting a lullaby. (Nyx)

2023

Burnt linen, rubberwood

91.4 x 50.8 x 7.6 cm / 36 x 20 x 3 in

HS18-CL8203P

Yage Guo

The Night Grass

2022

Oil on panel

45.4 x 35.4 cm / 17.9 x 13.9 in

HS18-YG8237P

Yage Guo

Magic Mirror

2022

Oil on linen

50.6 x 45.7 cm / 19.9 x 18 in

HS18-YG8238P

Yage Guo

The Eyes of Moon

2022

Oil on canvas

50.6 x 40.5 cm / 19.9 x 15.9 in

HS18-YG8240P

Cole Lu

The last time he gave his body up, of all seasons, he learned from autumn how to cast the birds away. A year is a small piece beyond the time unit one called a century, in the century where his birth falls; the star had come closer and closer; the sun belt swung up and down, from solstice to solstice, becoming a streak of fire. Around him, new names and words occurred; some are foreign, some are home. (Geryon)

2023

Burnt birch

121.9 x 152.4 x 3.8 cm / 48 x 60 x 1.5 in

HS18-CL8202P

Esteban Jefferson

May 29, 2020

2023

Oil, ink stamp and graphite on linen

76.2 x 112 cm / 30 x 44.1 in (2 parts)

HS18-EJ8221P