

Beth Letain

*Bring the Ground to You*

April 12 – May 25, 2023

Opening reception Wednesday, April 12, 5 – 8PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *Bring the Ground to You* by Beth Letain (b. 1976 in Canada), a series of new paintings presented for the first time in Milan.

In this series of works, Letain alters her method to take on new configurations, building on a long-established painterly style that renders minimal geometric forms in large swathes of color. Where white primer has been a key visual feature of the majority of previous paintings, in this body of work Letain largely conceals the colorless ground to privilege dense fields of color. Thick, velvet coats of paint veil the white base layers underneath, signaling a departure from her earlier methods of working with more translucent materials.

“Doubt is what allows a single gesture to have a heart,” writes Fanny Howe, a writer Letain often draws on through her process. Although Letain is often situated within a lineage of minimalist abstraction, she resists the pull to total uniformity that distinguishes this artistic genre. This is most evident in her refusal to use a ruler, for example, and the continued visibility of her brushstrokes, two ways in which she reveals a nuanced vulnerability in authorship. Mistakes are visible and integrated in Letain’s paintings—a clever gesture, given that she executes such exact forms entirely by hand. These new works are not as rough-hewn and loose as previously, but they nevertheless continue to approach the minimalist style with a defiant spontaneity.

Form is mediated by the viscosity of the paint she uses, and here Letain’s pigments, which she mixes herself, occasion this new approach to shape. Her palette is rich and vibrates with intense saturation, the edges of the forms made sharper by their arrangement side by side. Letain approaches her canvases as though they are solid objects. Like a sculptor, she carves into the material with her brush, treating her painted works like pre-existing matter, and distancing herself from the idea that she layers hues onto the neutral space of white primer within the boundaries of a flat surface.

Smaller in scale than her usual canvases, these new works elaborate Letain’s abstract visual language in increasingly complex formal arrangements. The natural world influences how she develops her lexicon: she has an obsession with trees, visible in the way she organizes her works according to a central structure, with arms branching toward the periphery of each canvas. Her life lived between various cities is also evident in the accentuation of grids, systems and circuitry.

Yet, these paintings are not firmly encapsulated by physical boundaries, and one is compelled to wonder what happens “off-stage”—to the side, and behind each surface. Importantly, both Letain’s works and her attitude to painting do not rigidly fix meaning to visual outcomes. Although the artist is motivated to paint by the images she thinks up—as opposed to the materials she uses, for instance, which she adopts in service to executing her vision—her works remain open to interpretation, favoring the experience of looking over the authority of telling.

Throughout *Bring the Ground to You*, Letain expresses a desire for more expansiveness, even if these works are scaled down. This series signifies Letain’s move toward a different psychic space in order to be differently stimulated. Hence, new forms, new colors, new methods. “I am walking through my own uncanny valley,” she says, in reference to the simultaneous resemblances and striking differences between her various artistic modes, playfully appreciating her own buoyant rhythm.

This is Beth Letain’s third solo exhibition with Peres Projects and her first in our Milan gallery. Recent solo exhibitions include *Trees for the Forest*, Leeahn Gallery, Daegu and Seoul (2022), *Beth Letain: Mountain Climbers*, L21, Palma de Mallorca (2021), *Warm Grey*, Patrick De Brock Gallery, Knokke (2020), *ultrapath*, Peres Projects, Berlin (2019), and *Signal Hill*, Pace, London (2018). She has also presented her work in numerous group exhibitions, including *Nothing in particular*, the Friedrichs Foundation, Weidingen (2021), and *An Action without Image*, curated by Christian Malycha, Kunstverein Reutlingen, Reutlingen (2018). Letain’s work has been reviewed in leading critical publications including *Artforum*, *FlashArt*, *ArtNews*, and *Border Crossings*. In June, Letain will be part of the group exhibition *the yellow light at 6 pm. Remembering, envisioning, sensing landscape*, curated by Christian Malycha, at Max Hetzler Gallery in Berlin.