

Emily Ludwig Shaffer  
*Five Ways to See*  
Opening June 7, 2024, 6–9 PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *Five Ways to See*, Emily Ludwig Shaffer's (b. 1988 in San Francisco, US) second solo exhibition with the gallery and her first in Milan.

Through a new series of highly graphic and colorful paintings, Emily Ludwig Shaffer engages her distinctive hard-edge aesthetic and architectural sense of composition in an immersive examination of the sensorial potential of painting. Her clear lines, solid color blocks, velvety layers of paint, and imperceptible brushwork give shape to a singular interpretation of an art-historical trope: the painterly and allegorical representation of the five senses. Building upon Shaffer's long-standing visual exploration of the relationship between bodies and space, *Touch*, *Sound*, *Smell*, *Taste* (all 2024) and *Sight* (2023), the five large-format, near human-scale paintings that form the core of the exhibition, pull the viewer into domestic and semi-enclosed spaces that appear simultaneously illusionistic and surreal.

Playing with varying scales in *Taste* or textured surfaces in *Touch* and *Sight*, the paintings engage the viewer's body, inviting them to come closer to observe the minute details of the compositions or, conversely, to step back and appreciate the works in their entirety. More often than not, the paintings are peopled by Shaffer's signature stone figures. However, even when unpopulated, the works are never uninhabited. A pair of shoes left under a table or a Surf and Turf meal served in a miniature dining room act as proxies for the absent bodies and as conduits for the viewer to step into Shaffer's imagined spaces.

While her smooth surfaces, razor-sharp shapes, and grid-like and cubic structures connect her work to a modernist and, to some extent, digital aesthetic, Shaffer often explores art and craft traditions predating the modern period. *Five Ways to See* draws inspiration from *The Lady and the Unicorn* (c. 1500). A polyptych tapestry from the late medieval period, the work depicts the five senses in the *millefleur* style typical of European late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance tapestry. The artist's interest in medieval works is not new; *The Book of the City of Ladies* (c. 1405) by Christine de Pizan, for instance, inspired her 2022 solo exhibition at Peres Projects in Berlin. This manifests in paintings that defy a rationalist approach to the world and its representation, such as through distorted perspectives, with the artist favoring works that cultivate mystery and ambiguity.

Just like *The Lady and the Unicorn* includes a sixth, enigmatic panel titled "Mon seul désir" (My only desire), supposedly depicting a sixth sense, Shaffer's new series explores her interpretation of this additional sense through three smaller works—*Millefleurs*, *The Neighbor's Way*, and *Developing Taste* (all 2023). Capturing images that spontaneously emerged in her mind while working on the series, they function as offshoots of the larger paintings and collectively portray the artist's sense of intuition. Ultimately, *Five Ways to See* celebrates a multisensory, embodied, and subjective perception of one's environment, drawing notably on Shaffer's personal memories. One particularly dear to the artist is the concerto of heavy rain and songbirds experienced during a storm in England, depicted in *Sound*.

Intuitive and organic, Shaffer's rendering of the senses is infused with a certain playfulness, particularly salient in pieces such as *Taste* and *The Neighbor's Way*, where her architectural structures evoke dollhouses. This connection to childhood is significant, as the artist describes how, since becoming a mother in 2021, she has been rediscovering the world through the eyes—and physical experiences—of a child. It is indeed through the body and senses that one first becomes acquainted with the world, and the exhibition invites to reconnect with sensorial perception as an embodied form of cognition.

Although perhaps in a more indirect manner, this new body of work contributes to Shaffer's ongoing contemplation of how women occupy space, touching on both concrete spaces and symbolic ones such as art history. The history of art and aesthetic judgment, subtly referenced in *Developing Taste*, are intertwined with hierarchies of the senses. Strongly imbued with gender values, as argued by feminist theorists such as Griselda Pollock and Julia Kristeva, these hierarchies have played a role in the gradual invisibilization of women artists since the early Renaissance. By engaging with the senses, Shaffer, whose work frequently references arts and

crafts traditionally associated with women, delves deeper into her enduring desire to explore how women express themselves aesthetically and artistically while creating space for sharing new ways to see.

This is Emily Ludwig Shaffer's second solo exhibition with Peres Projects and her first in our Milan gallery. Her recent solo exhibitions include Galerie PACT, Paris (2023 and 2020); Peres Projects, Berlin (2022); Dio Horia, Mykonos (2021); L'INCONNUE, New York (2021); Institute 193, Lexington (2019). Her work has been featured in a number of group exhibitions, including *The New, New*, Peres Projects, Seoul (2023); *House Parté II: The Final Salé*, Carlye Packer, Los Angeles (2022); *Tu es Métamorphose*, Galerie PACT, Paris (2022); *The Interior*, Venus Over Manhattan, New York (2021); *Contemporary Domesticity*, Taymour Grahne Projects, London (2021); *Good Pictures*, Jeffrey Deitch, New York (2020). She is currently participating in the group exhibition *FULL DISCLOSURE, Selections from the Thomas-Suwall Collection*, curated by Anne-Laure Lemaitre, at Plains Art Museum, Fargo.

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