



Mathilde Denize. *Sound of Figures*, 2024. Oil on canvas. 78 3/4 x 63 inch. Photographer: Tanguy Beurdeley. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

MATHILDE DENIZE

SOUND OF FIGURES

January 11 – February 19, 2025

Perrotin is pleased to present *Sound of Figures*, a solo exhibition by French artist Mathilde Denize.

Working across painting, installation, sculpture, performance, and video, Mathilde Denize's artistic process insists on a continuity between otherwise fragmented or disparate forms. Featuring found objects, and inspired by her time as a set designer, Denize often uses surplus pigments from film sets as the basis of her paintings. Embodying the process of fragmentation and translation, she often cuts up her former paintings, to assemble them into new sculptural constructions. Often resembling the human form, her work aligns questions of the gendered and sexualized body with the act of artmaking.

In Mathilde Denize's *Sound of Figures*, a suite of new paintings in acrylic and watercolor surrounds sculptural garments suspended from the ceiling and ceramic vessels punctuating the gallery. Describing her paintings as "landscapes," Denize's "fluid expanses" are inherent not only in the permeable atmospheres, the virtual environs of her canvases but also clearly inclusive of the space beyond them as well. Denize's geography courts a spirit of continuity and conversation between her paintings and the complementary forms that populate the space between the gallery's walls.

Exceeding one format or media, Denize's vocabulary floats into the real space of the gallery in the form of dimensional experiments that echo the silhouettes and shapes familiar to her canvases, casting the gallery space itself as a greater landscape shifted and choreographed according to Denize's evocative design. In this, Denize looks to precursors such as Ree Morton and Anna Boghigian.

In keeping with this cross-pollinating spirit, Denize's titles for these works and the exhibition they assemble into likens the visual forms at play here with similarly graphic sonic phenomena, or messages from ephemeral spirits who speak from behind a painted veil. In her words, they "echo" or "murmur," gurgling up from the possibly infinite zone beneath or beyond the surface of each painting. Such equations recall the visionary hypotheses of abstract artists such as Wassily Kandinsky or Hilma af Klint. To this legacy, Denize adds an inquiry into the materiality of memory, casting the painting as a space for both forgetting and excavating. Quasi-archeological, her proposal recalls the tenets of psychoanalysis, and its layered model of consciousness. Framed in this way, the paintings become theaters for working out, or through, a cycle of primal or transcendental truths encoded in abstract forms layered one atop another in pursuit of powerful secrets.



Mathilde Denize. *Sound of Figures*, 2024. Acrylic and watercolor on canvas, pigments. 74 13/16 x 55 1/8 inch. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Mathilde Denize. *Sound of Figures*, 2024. Acrylic and watercolor on canvas, pigments. 72 13/16 x 96 7/16 inch. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

A palette of blues, purples, pinks, and reds—framed by scaffolding of both smoky and solid passages of white—centers this suite in a focused thicket of color theory that ambiently channels the oceanic, subterranean, cosmic, romantic, glamorous, and opulent in turns. Biomorphic contours sinuously distinguish one field or form from another. Shapes emerge thanks to pops of distinct color or contrasting saturations, from solid facets to translucent washes. The solidity of acrylic mixes with the evanescence and more inherent solubility of watercolor on Denize's seductive canvases, facilitating her courtship of a slippery, gradient atmosphere indeterminate in its subtle shifts. From it, Denize conjures solid forms and planes from its mysterious murk, forms that begin to assemble into the solidity of architecture or similarly constructed skeletons, evoking mobiles or other floating forms, migrating and moving in concert like schools of fish or flocks of birds. Elsewhere, they are like dancefloors for abstract shapes, hazy exchanges for dreams or memories of the work of Juan Miro, Alexander Calder, or Roberto Matta. Formal vocabularies framed by global crisis.

Descending as they do, Denize's garments suggest the ceremony of vestments, designs crafted for an unknown or mysterious religion fueled by transubstantiating rites. Full sleeves, and long columnar silhouettes echo the seriousness of academic, royal, or religious regalia, as well as their fantastical adaptation in narratives of futuristic alien galaxies or imaginary cultures lost to history. Heavy shoulders and breastplates suggest the armor of a medieval European knight or Japanese samurai. Meanwhile, they also echo the long, elegant columns of a luxurious, full length evening gowns, and here-and-there, the hourglass tailoring of womenswear. The commitment to sleeves for every garment echoes a similar commitment to fanciful handles or wings for each ceramic vessel. As such, Denize encourages us again to think without bounds of a permeability of format and form, to appreciate the similar role of her paintings, garments, and vessels, all evocative vessels, containers designed for and shaped by otherwise esoteric forces.

- Grant Johnson