

MAUVAISES HERBES: SARAH CROWNER, CAITLIN KEOGH, PAULINA OLOWSKA

28 APRIL – 27 MAY 2017

PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY, 27 APRIL, 6 – 8 PM

“If you glance through your botanical books, you will see often added to certain names – ‘a troublesome weed’. It is not its being venomous, or ugly, but its being impertinent – thrusting itself where it has no business, and hinders other people’s business – that makes a weed of it.”

John Ruskin, *Proserpina. Studies of Wayside Flowers*, 1875-1886, p.109

Simon Lee Gallery Hong Kong is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by three artists whose links of friendship and common interest contrast sharply with their widely divergent approaches to painting, strategies of image making and the relation of narrative content in their work to the field of abstraction and figuration.

For Sarah Crowner, the process of making paintings and stitched canvases is one of figuring and unfiguring. Painted forms, more saturated in colour than those seen in previous bodies of work, refer to and represent botanical specimens, especially sea grasses, kelp, pods and weeds. These shapes are then cut, sliced, dissected, collaged and re-stitched in a process of manipulation which echoes the pervasive vine-like transfiguration of the weeds themselves. Existing in an undefined zone between painting, collage, and the applied arts, her canvases subtly call into question the stability of these categories.

The crystalline graphic crispness of Caitlin Keogh’s new paintings belie the persistent, invasive and rampant habits of their motifs. Knots and vines, drawing on equal measure upon the designs of William Morris, the aesthetics of Art Nouveau, paisley fabric design and entomological illustration, are presented at once as formal devices and as psycho-sexual symbols. Vines become veins, and knots intestines. These works propose a kind of decorative hysteria, depictions of a woman’s body not in its fleshly reality but rather recalling Magritte’s truncated and skin-like female torsos, occupy overgrown psychedelic or psychological space, at once saccharine and sinister.

Paulina Olowka’s most recent series of paintings take as their subject the Lithuanian scientist and educator Dr. Birutė Galdikas. Celebrated internationally for her conservational research, for over four decades Galdikas has studied and worked closely with the orangutans of Indonesian Borneo in their natural habitat. Olowka’s paintings revisit and re-present familiar images from the conservationist’s life; the tenderness of her relationship with the subjects of her study and the fragility of the jungle environment in which she lived alongside them.

The works in this exhibition traverse at different points this landscape of the vegetal, female, feminist and biological. Through radically divergent strategies of representation and figuration they reveal a common interest in the convergence of subject and execution.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Sarah Crowner was born in 1974 in Philadelphia, PA and lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. She received her BA from the University of California, Santa Cruz and her MFA from Hunter College, New York. In January 2017, a major installation by the artist, commissioned specifically for The Wright restaurant, opened at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Beetle in the Leaves*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2016-2017); *Plastic Memory*, Simon Lee Gallery, London, UK (2016); *Everywhere the Line is Looser*, Casey Kaplan, New York, NY (2015); *Interiores*, Travesia Cuatro, Guadalajara, Mexico (2014); *Motifs*, Galerie Catherine Bastide, Brussels, Belgium (2014); *The Wave*, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York, NY (2014); *Rehearsal*, Galerie Nordenhake, Stockholm, Sweden (2012). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Jewish Museum,

New York, NY (2015); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (2014); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2013); WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, Belgium (2013); ICA, Philadelphia, PA (2013); Zacheta National Museum of Art, Warsaw, Poland (2013); Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2013); and the 2010 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2010). Her work is held in major private and public collections including Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, amongst others.

Caitlin Keogh was born in Spenard, Alaska in 1982 and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She received her BFA from The Cooper Union School of Art, New York and her MFA from Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts, Bard, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Loose Ankles*, Bortolami, New York, NY (2016); *The Corps*, Mary Boone Gallery, New York, NY (2015); *The Natural World*, Melas Papadopoulos, Athens, Greece (2013); *Good Value, Fine Quality*, MoMA PS1, New York (2012). Major group exhibitions include *Gut Feelings*, Zuckerman Museum of Art at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA (2017), *The Hole*, Künstlerhaus Bremen, Germany (2016), *Flatlands*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2016), *Queens Museum Studio Program Exhibition*, Queens Museum, Queens, New York, NY (2015), *Te Kust en te Keur*, Mu.ZEE, Ostende, Belgium (2012) and *Town Gown Conflict*, Kunsthalle Zurich, Switzerland (2011). Her work is held in major private and public collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

Paulina Olowska was born in 1976 in Gdansk, Poland and lives and works in Rabka, Poland and London, UK. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL and her MFA from The Academy of Fine Arts, Gdansk, Poland. She was recently awarded The Aachen Art Prize (2014). Olowska's work has been shown extensively internationally and has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions and projects, including *The Kitchen*, New York, NY (2017), Tate Modern, London, UK (2015), Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany (2015), The Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, Poland (2014), The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2013), Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2013), CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco, CA (2010), Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (2009), Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany (2009) and Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Germany (2007). Major group exhibitions include Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2016), Manifesta 11, The European Biennial of Contemporary Art, Zurich, Switzerland (2016), Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria (2016), Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2015), Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2014). Her work is held in major private and public collections including Tate, London, UK, Sammlung Boros, Berlin, Germany, Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands, Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland, Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA and Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.