

DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

Lucy Bull

Skunk Grove

March 20 – May 1, 2021

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to announce Skunk Grove, its first exhibition of new paintings by Lucy Bull. The show opens on March 20 and will be on view through May 1, 2021.

Lucy Bull's paintings are visceral works that appeal directly to the senses. Synesthetic fields of shape and color, they are described in sonic, tactile, or even emotional terms that evade rational logic and are unique to each viewer. This tension between the paintings' bracing, unexpected materiality and the subjective responses it elicits engenders something akin to transformation: as their formal attributes function as visual bait, the eye is drawn into the atmospheric spaces of each composition before encountering a limitless number of associative openings. Worlds take shape across their varied surfaces and just as quickly fall away again; similarly, just when the act of looking generates optical overload or disruptive dissonance, Bull's accumulations of marks reveal discernible traces of planning and hard-fought negotiations with her materials, leading the viewer back toward the concrete realities of pigment, medium, and surface.

The gestures that animate the works in Skunk Grove gravitate toward several overlapping categories. They include daubed, gauzy veils; illusionistic swirls and stratifications; and networks of scratched marks that give way to underlying areas of paint. But even these are mere generalizations, as any attempt to fix Bull's abstract language within the constraints of descriptive analysis falls short. In this respect, the paintings seem to depict the process of grasping for solid interpretive ground while simultaneously acknowledging that there are times when the ground must fall away. Between these extremes, worlds are created and destroyed; thoughts give way to feelings, and vice versa; and life's constant fluctuations are given symbolic expression as passages between discrete sections of a composition give way to those that surround and engulf it. Every element of the picture communicates—sometimes harmoniously, sometimes sharply—as part of an immersive, atmospheric whole.

The relative familiarity generated by Bull's broad categories of mark-making serves as a guide into the unknown territories that crystallize on each canvas, especially as the viewer follows them from one painting to the next. At the same time, this approach allows her to break down the temporal experiences of producing—and seeing—painting. Unable to discern what came

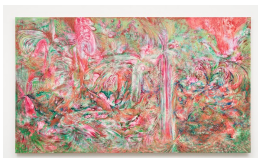
first or last, time and space appear for artist and viewer alike as elliptical, self-generating feedback loops. The effect is a kind of rapturous disorientation, one made more intense by Bull's color combinations, which reach toward the ethereal, border on the grotesque, and expose the tender, vulnerable places where conscious and unconscious collide.

Though she is guided by experiential interactions with the paintings as they progress in real time, Bull makes room for several lineages of aesthetic exploration to coalesce in her work. These include phantasmagorical tendencies in both art and literature, as well as the surrealist willingness to confront—and harness—forces that animate the subterranean depths of the psyche. Also important are the many shadings of the romantic sublime that have fascinated artists throughout the centuries, both inside and outside of canonical trajectories, and aided in the conjuring of landscapes of the mind.

In each of these cases, however, Bull roots viewers in the here and now, connecting the visionary facets of her project to strains of non-objective painting, modernist and otherwise, that require no recourse to outside references but instead generate meaning by way of form, hue, texture, and scale alone. As she engages in these open-ended experiments, she makes room for both precision and abandon, inviting viewers to participate in ever-unfinished processes of creation that she choreographs but never fully controls.

Lucy Bull (b. 1990, New York) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at High Art (Arles, 2020; Paris, 2019); Human Resources, Los Angeles (2019); Smart Objects, Los Angeles (2019); and RMS Queen Mary, Mother Culture, Long Beach, California (2017). Recent group exhibitions include Life Still, CLEARING, New York (2020); I Want to Eat the Sunset. We're Talking About the Cosmos. Even. And Love, I Guess, Almine Rech, New York (2020); and El oro de los tigres, Air de Paris, Romainville, France (2020). Her work is in the collection of the ICA Miami. Bull lives and works in Los Angeles.

Lucy Bull
Skunk Grove
March 20 - May 1, 2021



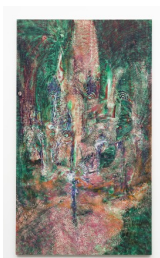
Lucy Bull
Pussy Willow, 2021
oil on linen
69 x 120 x 1 1/2 inches
(175.3 x 304.8 x 3.8 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.013)



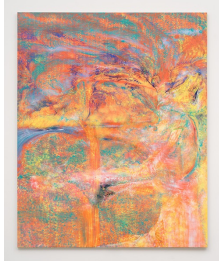
Lucy Bull
Evening Switch, 2021
oil on linen
79 x 54 x 1 inches
(200.7 x 137.2 x 2.5 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.009)



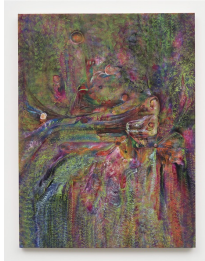
Lucy Bull
5:00, 2021
oil on linen
69 x 120 x 1 1/2 inches
(175.3 x 304.8 x 3.8 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.014)



Lucy Bull
Liquid Rubies, 2021
oil on linen
84 x 48 x 1 inches
(213.4 x 121.9 x 2.5 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.018)



Lucy Bull
Veiled Threat, 2021
oil on linen
84 x 68 x 1 inches
(213.4 x 172.7 x 2.5 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.016)



Lucy Bull
Crooked Coda, 2020
oil on linen
48 x 36 x 1 1/2 inches
(121.9 x 91.4 x 3.8 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.008)



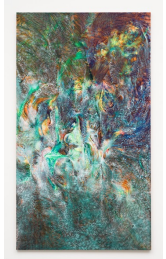
Lucy Bull
Skingame, 2021
oil on linen
84 x 48 x 1 inches
(213.4 x 121.9 x 2.5 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.005)



Lucy Bull
Stinger, 2021
oil on linen
54 x 79 x 1 inches
(137.2 x 200.7 x 2.5 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.011)



Lucy Bull
Last Dial, 2020
oil on canvas
40 x 30 x 1 1/2 inches
(101.6 x 76.2 x 3.8 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.007)



Lucy Bull
Permission, 2021
oil on linen
96 x 54 x 1 inches
(243.8 x 137.2 x 2.5 cm)
(Inv# LBU 20.017)



Lucy Bull

The Bottoms, 2021

oil on linen

72 x 98 x 1 inches

(182.9 x 248.9 x 2.5 cm)

(Inv# LBU 20.019)

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

LUCY BULL

born 1990, New York, NY
lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

EDUCATION

2012 BFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL

SELECTED SOLO / TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

(* indicates a publication)

- 2021 *Skunk Grove*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2020 *Sisper*, High Art, Arles, France
- 2019 *First Meetings*, High Art, Paris, France
Squall, Smart Objects, Los Angeles, CA
Loofah, Queens, Los Angeles, CA
The Damage, Human Resources, Los Angeles, CA
- 2017 *Queens Way*, RMS Queens, Mother Culture, Long Beach, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

(* indicates a publication)

- 2020 *I Want to Eat the Sunset. We're Talking About the Cosmos, Even. And Love, I Guess.*, Almine Rech New York, NY
Life Still, CLEARING, New York, NY
El Oro de los Tigres, Air de Paris, Paris, France
Stay Safe, Shivers Only, Chantemanche, France
- 2019 *The Barn Show*, Johannes Vogt Gallery (Offsite location), East Hampton, NY
- 2018 *Worms Brains*, AWHRHVAR, Los Angeles, CA

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(* indicates non-periodical book, catalog, or other publication)

- 2021 Solomon, Tessa and Claire Selvin, "ARTnews in Brief: David Kordansky Gallery Now Represents Lucy Bull—and More from March 8, 2021," *ARTnews.com*, March 8, 2021
- 2020 Tarasoff, Sabrina, "Primavera (An Elegy)," *Mousse Magazine*, Issue Summer 2020
Goussard, Mélanie, "Aaron Curry, Haley Josephs, Lucy Bull I Want to Eat the Sunset. We're Talking About the Cosmos, Even. And Love, I Guess.," *ArtDaily.com*, Summer 2020
Harriman, Kat, "Artist Lucy Bull Invites Others Into Her Cosmos," *CulturedMag.com*, 2020
- 2019 "Where Impulsivity Meets Taste: Lucy Bull @ Smart Objects, Los Angeles," *Juxtapoz.com*, June 5, 2019
"Lucy Bull at High Art," *ArtWritingDaily.com*, September 26, 2019
- 2017 **Lucy Bull: Plume*, Paris: Onestar Press, 2017

Solomon, Tessa and Claire Selvin, "ARTnews in Brief: David Kordansky Gallery Now Represents Lucy Bull—and More from March 8, 2021," *ARTnews.com*, March 8, 2021

ARTnews

ARTnews in Brief: David Kordansky Gallery Now Represents Lucy Bull—and More from March 8, 2021

By Claire Selvin, Tessa Solomon | March 8, 2021



Lucy Bull. ELON SCHOENHOLZ

David Kordansky Gallery Now Represents Lucy Bull

David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles has added painter Lucy Bull to its roster. The artist, who has previously exhibited work at Human Resources in Los Angeles, Almine Rech in New York, and other venues, is known for her experimental abstractions. Bull will show new works with the gallery in a show running from March 20 to May 1.

Artist Lucy Bull Invites Others Into Her Cosmos

By Kat Harriman | 2020

In 2014, Lucy Bull found Los Angeles and stayed. On the phone, the painter confesses she still misses fall on the East Coast, where she grew up. Right after graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she decided the sunshine did something for her brain. Those Rorschach moments of hot clarity remain visible on the skins of Bull's optically charged paintings, which drag the viewer into a cinematic trance. In the past, some have likened Bull's canvases to songs, in the way that they produce durational experiences as the eye is drawn over the kinetic optics of the 2-D surface.

Music is a recurring inspiration for Bull, but it's the automatic brushwork of the Surrealists and their filmmaking peers that have loomed large in her thinking recently, in addition to her forever muse: Hollywood and the weird mythologies that spin outwards from it. Her cinephilia bleeds not only into her relationship with her chosen hometown, but also into her compositions, which purposefully drag out time to allow fantasy the head start it needs to catch the tail of the truth. "Time is everything," Bull says bluntly. "I've always been jealous of filmmakers, who expect no one will leave the theater. When I'm painting, I'm always thinking about creating the same kind of psychic space that a movie does because I think it's better when you are invited to feel your way through an experience. It's through indulging our unconscious that we find reality." In addition to the space she makes in her paintings, Bull is known for her exhibition program, which she's been running out of her apartment since 2017. The program is perfunctorily titled, "From the Desk of Lucy Bull," as most of the works are exhibited on a dedicated plank in her home, but the truth is that the shows tend to spill over. There have been neighbor-rousing performances, shoulder-to-shoulder parties and rowdy meals. Like LA, Bull radiates with a generosity that attracts wild energy to her sublime abstractions, some of which were on view this December in Arles, thanks to a High Art gallery annex.



A SELF-PORTRAIT BY LUCY BULL (2020)



Almine Rech New York opens summer group exhibition



Installation View of *I Want to Eat the Sunset. We're Talking About the Cosmos, Even. And Love, I Guess*, 2020. Courtesy of Almine Rech. Photo: Dan Bradica.

NEW YORK, NY.- In a historic moment of vast upheaval, unprecedented in living memory, artists continue to create art that, as Josef Albers wrote, "comes from the human soul and speaks to human souls." Almine Rech's new exhibition, *I Want to Eat the Sunset. We're Talking About the Cosmos, Even. And Love, I Guess*.—Haley Josephs, [Lucy Bull](#), and Aaron Curry—presents creators whose work can engage a metaphysical discourse as much as art historical and intellectual traditions, whether figurative or abstract, in living color or in monochrome, painting or sculpture.

A glance at the artists' reading lists may illuminate matters. For Bull, it's anthropologist Michael Taussig's 2009 study *What Color is the Sacred?*, in which he contemplates color as a "polymorphous magical substance," a notion that resonates with Bull. For Curry, it's Albers's lectures, including his 1935 talk "Abstract Art," which concludes, "Art is spirit and spirit is eternal." For Josephs, it's Eckhart Tolle's 2005 *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, which invokes a "spiritual awakening."

Josephs's wildly chromatic paintings of girls and women in nature often evoke modernists like Gauguin as well as Alice Neel's boldly confrontational subjects. If her young girls assume dreamy attitudes, as in *Dream Child in the Boundless Yonder*, there's something ominous about these dreams. *Islands of Solitude*, with its Narcissus-like figure, is Josephs's first triptych; nature is an imposing presence, inspired here by the landscapes in Maine where she created these canvases. These are girls and young women with rich inner lives, whose complexity arrives clothed in deceptively artless color schemes. With their glowing skin, her subjects seem to have, as she says she would like to do, swallowed the sun.

Bull, meanwhile, paints surreal abstractions that possess both grand sweep and studied detail. She describes her canvases as both inward- and outward-looking: "They are traversing the recesses of my mind, but also talking about the cosmos, even." Her fine mark-making achieves an effect that buzzes on the surface, as if dosing us on some optical drug. Her practice is rich with historical affinities, such as the Pointillists, the Italian Futurists, and the Surrealist Roberto Matta.

Curry's sculptures engage with the bodily presence that is explicit in Josephs's work and implied in Bull's. Calling on formal qualities present in artists like Picasso and Calder, they gracefully and playfully engage with the force of gravity, which determines our own spatial and bodily experience and which dictates that we, and his quasi-figurative sculptures, find balance. Curry's sculptures begin with drawings and handmade maquettes that are often then developed through digital modifications and subsequently fabricated at often-monumental sizes; rather than aiming for seamlessness, they maintain some of the qualities of the handmade, lending the works in the current show a touch of whimsy despite their matte black surfaces.

Confined to his own quarters, following news of the pandemic while also creating music and sculpture, Curry, as well as Josephs and Bull in their own ways, has been thinking about priorities. "Science and art are the most important things for humans," he says, adding, "And love, I guess."

Mousse Magazine

Primavera (An Elegy)

By Sabrina Tarasoff | Summer 2020

"Lament is a pattern cut and fitted around my mind..."¹

Within the static atmosphere of inactivity, the psyche is often pushed to reinvent itself as pure storm: one is easily held hostage by the mind and its hotheaded whims. The boundaries between self and other are impossible to hold onto. The fragility and the permeability of the body are made apparent in these exchanges. Often it feels hallucinatory and stifling at the same time. I start to feel foreign. My self flickers with the shifting weather outside my window: atmospheric, political, emotional. Read it as you wish. I am told it's a cliché to think this way.

As an antidote to inherited sentiment I form a reading list of Sylvia Plath, Marcel Proust, Mary Shelley, John Milton, and Ovid. It becomes clear as I wade through their various storms that everyone, from Satan to Sylvia Plath to Semele, is subject to these laws of psychic weather. The history of literature is riddled with figures struggling to come to terms with the loss of perpetual spring. Upon experiencing the blithe scents of Eden, even Satan feels sad about having to return home to hell. He wails:

"Me Miserable!"²

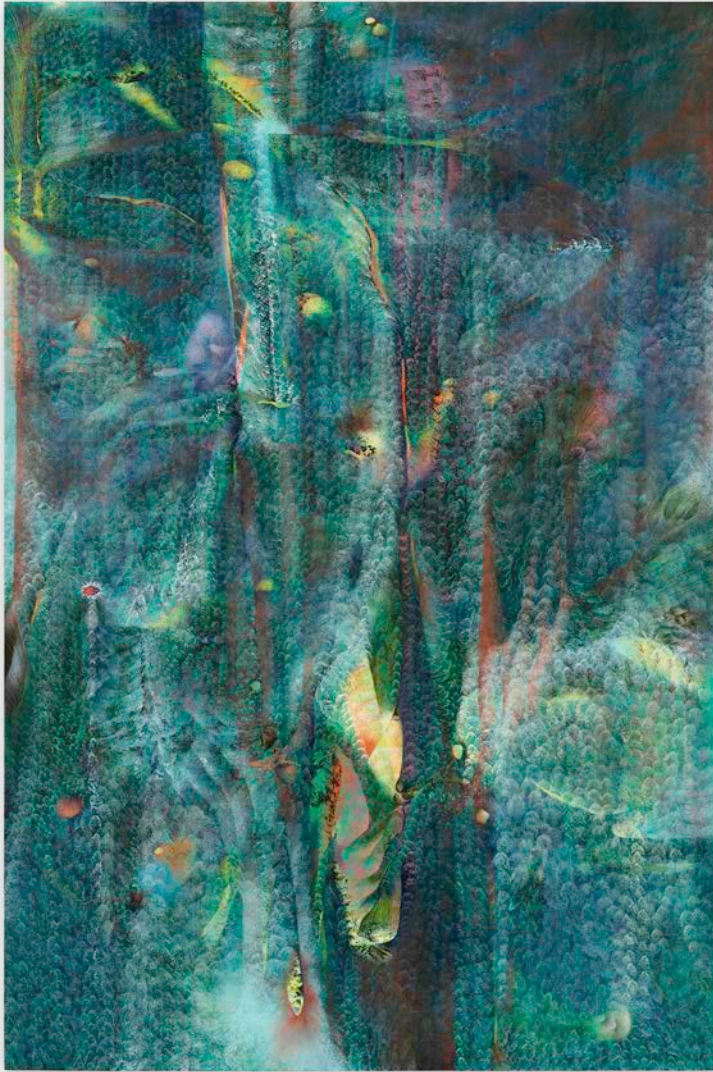
It is early June at the time I am writing. Spring was largely spent in the great psychic indoors. Summer has appeared as a graven monument to springtime rite. (Spring has notably been lost to poor Pangolin: it occurs to me that many evils begin with a bite of something.) For months I pretend I am followed by a Greek chorus. It makes the follies of online life more bearable. As in Sophocles's *Electra*, the members of the chorus speak only to themselves: an "anti-dialogue," as Anne Carson once called it.³ Also following *Electra*, at one point something snaps: I join yet another video call, and imagine myself screaming at *Electra*'s high pitch: "And at what point does the evil level off in my life, tell me that!"⁴ Online viewing rooms amass. No one in the chorus answers. Someone changes their digital backdrop and disappears into a pixelated image of a garden. The euphoria of being left to my own devices edges a digital anxiety dream. Dreams of love that belonged to spring are unmade in an instant. Or, in Joan Didion's terms: "Life changes in the instant," even if the instant is often drawn out.⁵ What aches the most tends to go on and on. It becomes a durational event. In those first shocks (of love, of loss) time is distended. Things move in slow-mo. On June 5, 1978, Roland Barthes writes:

"For me, the Monument, is not *lasting*, not *eternal* (my doctrine is too profoundly *Everything passes*: tombs die too), it is an act, an action, an *activity that brings recognition*."⁶

And so spring becomes a lamentation. On my desk is a (weathered) copy of the *Fasti*, Ovid's versification of the Roman calendar. He likely wrote the *Fasti* simultaneously with the *Metamorphoses*, circa 1 CE onward until his sudden exile in 8 CE; it helps to consider the two texts as companion pieces. If the former describes a year in Roman life through the exaltations, traumas, and turmoils of the Gods as these are inscribed into civic rite as "sacred matters,"⁷ the other hones in on the mechanisms and meaning of transformation at the center of those stories. Each date is a frame. Days feel self-enclosed. The tales both hold time and tamper with its laws. Time loop-de-loops. Transformations take place not in chronological order, but in the "multiplication of the scenes, precipitation, overdetermination."⁸ Time is a sad tableau vivant. Still, sensuality seeps through.



Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, ca. 1478-1482. Uffizi, Florence. CC0



The poem's secret subject lies in its chosen meter: the elegiac couplet. Ovid extends the slender voice of the elegiac from lamentations of unhappy love to touch on loss as a substantial theme underwriting civic rites. Ovid understands, basically, that grief—or loss, in its most expanded sense—is “a pattern cut and fitted” around public life, where it consecrates in certain rites and rituals. He pushes an etiological reading of Roman history in order to reveal its foundational myths as emotional ones. In both the *Fasti*, as in the *Metamorphoses*, the event of loss becomes synonymous with the change catalyzed. Ovid uses this poetic form to shift focus from the tale to the commemorative act (of inscription, of writing, of recall). In part this entails dethroning the epic and its insistence on heroism as a model for social life. But it also pushes an idea of private experience into proximity with an epic scale: love, and loss, are recognized for possessing signifiatory power over time. The calendar, like the diary, or the love letter, is a monument to the intemperateness of myth, constantly renegotiated.

On the cover of my edition, tellingly, is a detail from Sandro Botticelli's *Primavera* (ca. 1478-1482) of the Goddess Flora, her face framed in Venetian blonde tresses and falling flowers. Her expression bears signs of some lethal blankness. Flora's stare haunts my head all spring. I had picked up the *Fasti* early in the year to rethink time as it is indexed in myth. But transfixed in Flora's face was an entirely other subject, namely stuck-ness, which in my head harked back to some of the final lines of Sylvia Plath's posthumous volume of poems, *Ariel* (1965). In

Lucy Bull, *Crimes of the Future*, 2019. Courtesy: the artist and HIGH ART, Paris

“Edge,” she writes:

“She has folded [...] Them back into her body as petals Of a rose close when the garden Stiffens and odours bleed.”⁹

Consider *Ariel* a kind of epitaph. Plath's verse is lucid, and distant. It devastates with a promise of spring, foreclosed. Her language forms a garden that ravishes and drags to a standstill. Roses are flat. Branches are murderous, and they strangle. The will is petrified. Poppies are pale flames. Tulips are too red, and this redness “talks to my wound, it corresponds.”¹⁰ Spring flickers in the poems, but only as a threat. Flit back to the *Fasti*. On February 10, at the edge of spring, Ovid warns of cold spells still to come. Plath commits suicide on February 11, 1963. I notice while reading that there is no entry for this day in the *Fasti*. I find it remarkable. Not because I care to venerate Plath's refusal to see herself through another season. Instead the coincidence seems to confirm the place of the paralytic in spring. It points to Botticelli's painting to suggest that the stuck-ness etched in Flora's features signals, simply, something that has been lost. It is not until “Book 5: May” (May 2, to be precise) of the *Fasti* that Flora appears. Roses spill from her mouth as she speaks:

"I who am called Flora used to be Chloris. [...]

I used to be Chloris, a nymph of the happy field where once, you hear, fortunate men had business. What my figure was like, it's hard for me to tell you modestly—but it found for my mother a God as a son-in-law."

"It was spring, I was wandering. Zephyrus caught sight of me. I began to leave. He pursues, I flee, he was stronger."

In the *Primavera*, Flora's transformation is shown, strangely, in arrested motion. Her shape-shifting is freeze-framed. To the far right of the painting we see first the winged figure of Zephyrus, one of four Anemoi, or wind Gods, blowing into the court of Venus. He has been permitted entry into the garden of perpetual spring as his west wind promises balmy weather, but clearly he is disturbing the court's calm countenance. Laurel trees bend around the zephyr as he pushes into the garden. The curved boughs imitate the fleeing nymph's stature. She turns, panicked, to face the Wind, but the flat roses already spill from her mouth. Their stares lock. The flowers conjoin with those adorning the diaphanous dress of the woman beside. This woman, the Goddess Flora, is suspended in the act of strewing flowers. Her weightlessness is prime Botticelli. She is held at the edge of movement. Zephyrus, Chloris, and Flora form a visual chain that speaks to causality and change. Chloris is closed into the garden, or folded into Flora: "—and the lament remains," she consoles, "written on its petal."¹¹

What Plath—and Ovid and me and you and everyone we know—knows is that what fucks you up tends to be transformative. Violence pushes Flora to develop a language of flowers. Her grief finds an idiolect in the act of cultivation. "Through me, honor rises from their wound"¹² is referring to those turned into flowers by their metamorphoses. She has laid out their language through her own grief. But there are many other private languages in Ovid's tales. Those who love too much, become too jealous, see their selves threatened, are overcome by chaos, or other evils, or traps, are each transformed into various forms of life cut off from normative discourse. Mouths and tongues are often targets of violence. Their lamentations lose the calming consort of language. And still the paralytic manage to say what they mean. Their shrieks, screams, howls, and silences unsettle the surrounding world. "It takes a long time to relate examples of forgetfulness that have been put right by penalties," confesses Flora: "What was I to do? By what means was I to make my resentment plain? What penalties was I to exact for the slight on me?"¹³ She kills all vines and crops and gardens. Makes the skies go black. Sends squalls to topple boats. She lets signs perform her grief until it gains recognition by the Roman consuls. Eventually they vow to her the *Ludi Florales*, a festival of flowers, pleasure, wine. It announces (to the proletariat) the first days of summer.

For the most part, people are not transformed into divine versions of themselves when things go wrong. Transformations instead tend toward wildness. Grief is an image of "a real Bacchanale."¹⁴ Devastation and pleasure alike are often linked with acts of lying down. Crawling through the hell in our heads, sobbing on the floor. Rolling down meadows, *déjeuner sur l'herbe*, sex. I think about the complicated dynamic of this when Meriem Bennani and Orian Barki release their animated miniseries on Instagram about life in quarantine, called, simply, *2 Lizards* (2020). In episode 1, we follow two Brooklyn noble savages—both anthropomorphized artist-reptiles—marvelling at a rooftop scene while discussing being "kind of into" the isolation because of all the time it lends to private pleasures. Around them, various fauna on faraway roofs form a dispersed orchestra. Their flash mob plays a late-spring lamentation to the borough. The videos are sweet, witty, and sort of make my heart soar, but I get hung up on the lizards' disarming eloquence and upright stance. I wonder, perhaps too seriously for my own good, what this very humane version of being- or becoming-animal tells us. (I think to how Semele, the little lizard who lives beneath my mailbox, does lizard push-ups on all fours whenever she feels threatened. Her defense mechanism is to stand taller, her push a tiny act of resistance. It's cute.) By episode VI, the digital anxiety dream of lockdown has loosened, and the animal pals meet for dumplings to chat horror. One of the lizards recalls an absurdist trauma from childhood: "You know that the story of *Us* happened to me?... When I was five, I also got lost in a mirror maze for about an hour, and the park security had to come get



Milena Büsch, *Biene Maja / Maya blau*, 2018. Courtesy: the artist and FELIX GAUDLITZ, Vienna. Photo: kunst-dokumentation.com



Orian Barki and Meriem Bennani, *2 Lizards Episode 2 (still)*, 2020. Courtesy: the artists and CLEARING, New York / Brussels

me out." The secret heart of the miniseries flickers in front of me. Change is not always so straightforward. It pushes the chimerical. In tiny upward thrusts.

But, still perturbed by those left less sentient, I think also to the circumstances that freaked forth Milena Büsch's recent painting work. After a prolonged period of self-exile from the art world, distance had made the act of painting feel foreign. Everything around glittered in the aura of art, except what she was making, so she solved her stuck situation by taking to the readymade. She bought a plastic canvas covered in flowers and butterflies, painted over it, and called it a day. The shame made her sick, then suffer, and then finally, in slow motion, she felt some satisfaction. She felt herself solidify as a "painter" again. Perhaps painting on flimsy surfaces, carpets and napkins, troubled some blur between self and object. That is, maybe it helped her perspective (on art) to see painting so prostrate.

I realize in the midst of the June gloom how often I am overwhelmed by plant life. I am overwhelmed by my own plant-likeness. I often feel botanical. I try to solve this problem by identifying with plant-people. Not infrequently I dream about Édouard Vuillard's ability to make figures dissolve into a landscape. His paintings are ambient dreams of metamorphosis, but instead of pushing the human-animal boundary, people become patterns, wallpapers, shadows, plants. The works describe being swallowed into space. Vuillard nails a very contemporary anxiety of feeling oneself brightly and ecstatically dissolved. I often imagine that the apotheosis of this blur can be found in Lucy Bull's abstracted paintings. They seem shone through with pure light. Something in them glows like the promise of love (and traps, accordingly). In the midst of my botanization, a red tide also washes onto the coast of Southern California. A neon wave of bioluminescent plankton. The shore, all lit up, speaks a mysterious language. A friend tells me that some species communicate with their glow. "It's us that don't communicate by light that are weird," he says. "The sea was telling you something." The tricky thing is learning how to listen. If you figure it out, I think, it'll sing, or spring, you into change. Not lost at all, not lasting, but in motion—*tombs die too*.

Endnotes

- 1 Sophocles, *Electra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 56.
- 2 John Milton, "Book IV," in *Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 47.
- 3 Anne Carson, "Screaming in Translation," in *Sophocles, Electra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 50.
- 4 Carson, "Screaming in Translation," 50.
- 5 Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 3.
- 6 Roland Barthes, "June 5, 1978," in *Mourning Diary: October 26, 1977–September 15, 1979* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 133.
- 7 Ovid et al., "Introduction," in *Fasti* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 133.
- 8 Gilles Deleuze and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Masochism* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 70.
- 9 Sylvia Plath, "Edge," in *Ariel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 80.
- 10 Plath, "Edge," 13.
- 11 Ovid, "Book 5: May," 92.
- 12 Ovid, "Book 5: May," 92.
- 13 Ovid, "Book 5: May," 94.
- 14 Ovid, "Tereus, Procne, and Philomela," in *Metamorphoses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 139.

CULTURED

Artist Lucy Bull Invites Others Into Her Cosmos

By Kat Harriman | 2019

In 2014, Lucy Bull found Los Angeles and stayed. On the phone, the painter confesses she still misses fall on the East Coast, where she grew up. Right after graduating from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she decided the sunshine did something for her brain. Those Rorschach moments of hot clarity remain visible on the skins of Bull's optically charged paintings, which drag the viewer into a cinematic trance. In the past, some have likened Bull's canvases to songs, in the way that they produce durational experiences as the eye is drawn over the kinetic optics of the 2-D surface.

Music is a recurring inspiration for Bull, but it's the automatic brushwork of the Surrealists and their filmmaking peers that have loomed large in her thinking recently, in addition to her forever muse: Hollywood and the weird mythologies that spin outwards from it. Her cinephilia bleeds not only into her relationship with her chosen hometown, but also into her compositions, which purposefully drag out time to allow fantasy the head start it needs to catch the tail of the truth. "Time is everything," Bull says bluntly. "I've always been jealous of filmmakers, who expect no one will leave the theater. When I'm painting, I'm always thinking about creating the same kind of psychic space that a movie does because I think it's better when you are invited to feel your way through an experience. It's through indulging our unconscious that we find reality." In addition to the space she makes in her paintings, Bull is known for her exhibition program, which she's been running out of her apartment since 2017. The program is perfunctorily titled, "From the Desk of Lucy Bull," as most of the works are exhibited on a dedicated plank in her home, but the truth is that the shows tend to spill over. There have been neighbor-rousing performances, shoulder-to-shoulder parties and rowdy meals. Like LA, Bull radiates with a generosity that attracts wild energy to her sublime abstractions, some of which were on view this December in Arles, thanks to a High Art gallery annex.



A SELF-PORTRAIT BY LUCY BULL (2020)

● Contemporary Art Writing Daily

Lucy Bull at High Art

September 26, 2019



Lucy Bull at High Art

Psychedelia; Google deep dreams of Kahlo's flowers. Vulvas like volcanos, magma, geologic surveys. Abstraction was once "what you see is what you see" until what you saw became convoluted, full of hallucination and sexual. The press release says as much, and is good to admit as much, our complete return to surrealism. With better psychoactives. Surrealism works for today as art must be a fount eternal, and so the point today is to overlay as much as information as possible, until it blurs, slips, make inkblots with lsd.

"The boringness of Google's "Deep Dream" project was in making explicit the pareidolia latent, [what was] hidden in carpets and noise and threatened distrust in seeing, those momentary misrecognitions and ghosts in corners. Humans are apophenic machines - made to "see things." The inkblot innuendo was an essential of abstraction that was far too impure for post-war painting to deal with: it would have limited abstraction to the mere human, like Cecily Brown's meaty innuendos, very untranscendent in an era when people were throwing around the possibility of universals. Op-art was a cheap imitation of the purer form's sanctity; Op-art rested on physiologic parlor tricks of biological mechanics rather than the more strict and thus universal forms of abstraction that could communicate with dolphins and gods."

JUXTAPOZ

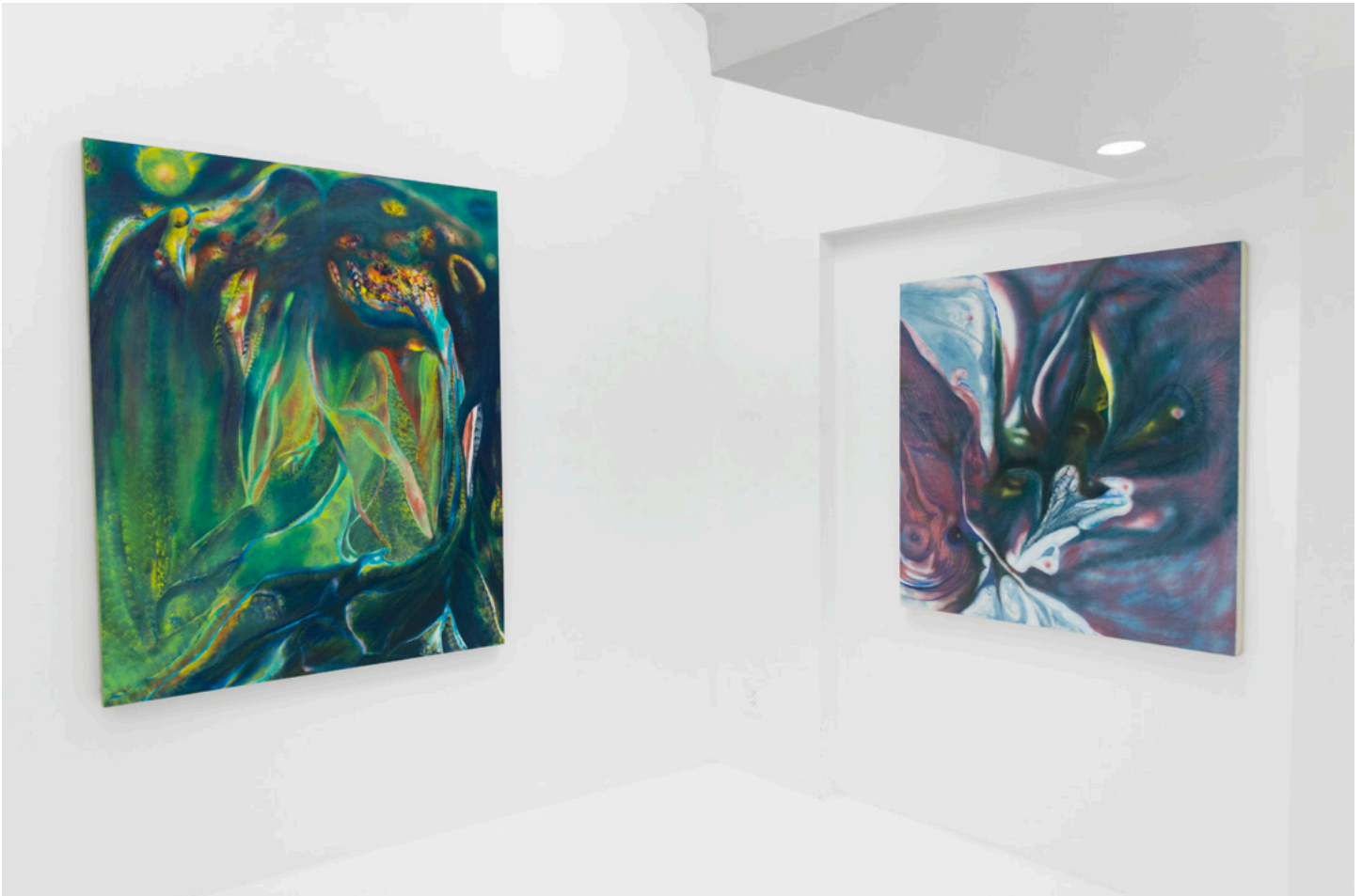
Where Impulsivity Meets Taste: Lucy Bull @ Smart Objects, Los Angeles

Smart Objects // May 10, 2019 - June 14, 2019

SMART OBJECTS presents *Squall*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Los Angeles based artist Lucy Bull. For Bull, the content is inseparable from the process. Wispy marks proliferate in sinuous waves, creating ripples of psychic notations, a foundation to scrape into. These marks may be smoothed, or built upon, as Bull careens toward her final destination. She has no aesthetic objective beyond balancing the competing forces of impulse and constraint – what is dictated by indulgence must be tempered with taste.

This dance between forces carries over into the nature of the paintings themselves. Rhythms and counter-rhythms accumulate, taking on a logic of their own. The light carries us through into a space with room to wonder. It's easy to get lost in the surface complexity and then, as if on time release, chimerical curiosities emerge. Our Rorschachian impulses are teased. We are suspended into a ping pong between worlds, real and imagined, as primordial appendages fight for salience.

Lucy Bull (b. 1990, New York) received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2012. Recent exhibitions include *Queens* (Los Angeles), *Human Resources* (Los Angeles), *AWHRHWAR* (Los Angeles), *Mother Culture* (online) and *Andrew Edlin Underground* (New York). In 2017, Bull published *Plume* with Onestar Press (Paris). She also runs a table-top exhibition space in her apartment called *From the Desk of Lucy Bull*. She lives and works in Los Angeles.



Squall at Smart Objects, Los Angeles