

rachel uffner



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shara Hughes
In Lieu of Flowers

May 3 – June 23, 2019
Opening Reception: Friday, May 3, 6 – 8pm

Rachel Uffner Gallery is pleased to present *In Lieu of Flowers*, Shara Hughes' second solo exhibition with the gallery.

For this show, Hughes takes a more pointed approach to the imaginative landscapes that have defined her practice for the past four years. The artist, looking to reinvigorate and reimagine a more specific element of this painterly trope, has created a series of flower paintings. The resulting works are vibrant and visionary, informed by Hughes' deep-seated knowledge of art history.

A wide range of brushstrokes and materials, including acrylic paint, oil paint, and dye, are utilized to create a sense of aggression and urgency within these works. The artist demonstrates confidence in her gesture, driven by intuition and abstract experimentation. The smaller paintings featured in the exhibition are the result of a much longer process. More time is spent with these pieces, sometimes months. Consideration for material, brushstrokes, and composition become crucial when working at this scale.

Playfulness is key to the artist's process, allowing the subject matter to become a metaphorical playground. The flowers echo sultry figures, becoming humanlike in their displayed traits and evolutionary actions. For example, *Naked Lady* is loosely based off the *Amaryllis belladonna* flower, known for its striking beauty and uniquely leafless stem. However, the *Amaryllis* is stealthily toxic, all of its parts poisonous if ingested. The seductive tendrils of Hughes' *Naked Lady* draws the viewer in close, as the venomous, strap-like leaves seem to melt off the canvas. *My Natural Nyctinasty* depicts a flower in nyctinastic movement, a nightly rhythm of a plant closing its petals in response to the onset of darkness. The bud takes shelter within itself, symbolically signaling that it is not to be disturbed.

Hughes' radical and cerebral approach to painting imbues the works with a sense of freedom and a vitality hardly contained by the canvas. While marking a deviation for the artist, *In Lieu of Flowers* features works that are remarkably spirited and distinctly grandiose, broadening the artist's prolific and expansive career.

In addition to the exhibition, Rachel Uffner Gallery is pleased to present a new monograph for the artist, in partnership with Galerie Eva Presenhuber. *Shara Hughes: Landscapes* marks the first in-depth survey of Hughes' work and features a new essay by Mia Locks titled "Working Tension: On Shara Hughes' Landscapes," an interview between the artist and curator Ian Alteveer, and more than 120 full-color illustrations. The book will be distributed by D.A.P. and available at the gallery for purchase.

Shara Hughes (b. 1981, Atlanta, GA) earned a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and later attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Recent solo exhibitions include The Arts Club, London, England; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland; the Newport Art Museum, Newport, RI; Gallery Met at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY; and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta, GA; among many others. In May 2018, Hughes completed *Carving Out Fresh Options*, a large-scale

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mural in Boston, MA commissioned by the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in partnership with the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum. Hughes has participated in numerous group exhibitions, at venues such as MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA. The artist was also included in the *2017 Whitney Biennial* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Hughes' work belongs to many prominent museum collections including the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; the Denver Museum of Art, Denver, CO; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; the Jorge M. Perez Collection, Miami, FL; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta, GA; the M Woods Museum, Beijing, China; the Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ; the Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, TX; the Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; the Si Shang Art Museum, Beijing, China; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; and the Whitney Museum of Art, New York, NY; among others. Hughes lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

Image: Shara Hughes, *Just Another Pretty Face*, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 68 x 60 inches (172.7 x 152.4 cm)

Please call (212) 274-0064 or email info@racheluffnergallery.com for more information.