

## SOPHIE VON HELLERMANN

October 19 – November 24

Greene Naftali is pleased to announce the second solo exhibition of new work by Sophie von Hellermann. Von Hellermann places her experience of the contemporary condition within a Romantic, subjective tradition through the use of a unique painting process, which emphasizes the mercurial nature of thought, memory, and experience. Instead of working with traditional paint, she creates layers of translucent color by applying acrylic pigment directly to unprimed canvas with an immediate and loose hand. Subject matter pulled both from the collective unconscious and from more personal imaginings runs inside and beyond the borders of each painting.

The paintings call upon scenarios that range from the catastrophic to the clandestine, in an uneasy juxtaposition that collides psychological traumas and myths with global ones. A view of post-apocalyptic Earth rocketing through space, titled *PPHHHHT*, hangs next to *Generation Gap*, an ambiguously ominous narrative with a headless stag. Nearby, in *His Story*, comically grotesque figures divide up a map of the world's people. *The More I Do It, The More I Lose It* depicts a woman plunging over a waterfall, her dire situation becoming merely punctuation to a composition dominated by veils of luminous, abstract color. The loose, colorful, and almost incidental manner in which the figures emerge from the space of the canvas belies the apparent seriousness of the subject matter.

Von Hellermann's new works also employ various representations of narrative belief structures old and new, from psychoanalysis and Celtic myths to the stories of popular culture. In a painting of the same name, the Rolling Stones' "Wild Horses" determines the actual form of a character's dream, confusing the boundary between a personal, individual psyche and an acculturated one. In *The Green Man*, a figure from British folklore hovers physically in the space over two lovers, while in *Analysis*, the memories and images produced by a therapy session emerge in visual form. These imaginings, products of the conscious or unconscious structuring of lived experience, are symbolic of the uneasy relationship between the actual and the imagined, the cultural and the personal, that characterizes von Hellerman's vision. By combining these apparent opposites in a painterly space that erases such easy distinctions, the artist creates a conception of a world similar to Lacan's, in which, he says, we awake into reality as an escape from the real.

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