

kathryn macnaughton

H E A T W A V E

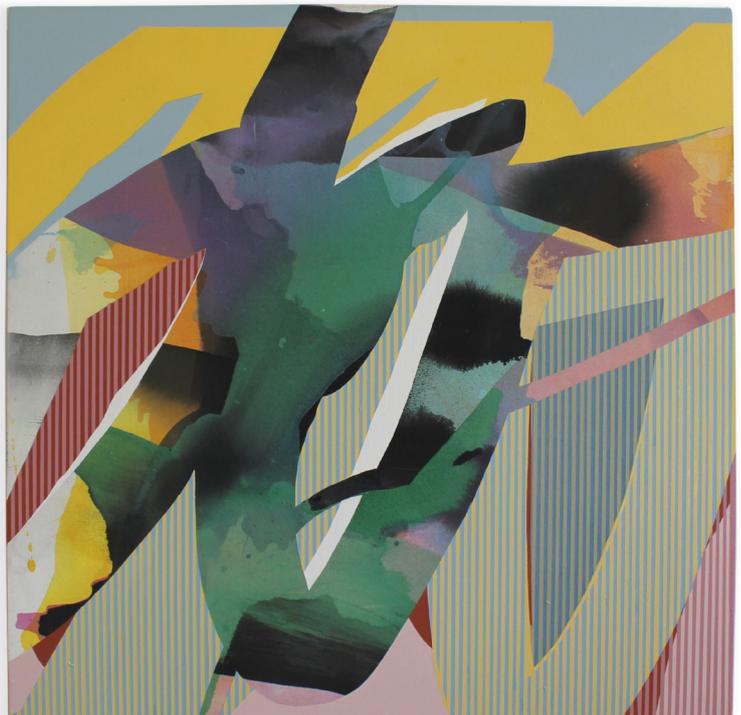
11 SEPT. - 10 OCT. 2020

Just prior to the international lockdown that saw millions working from home, Toronto-based, Canadian artist Kathryn MacNaughton secured a bright new studio with large windows where she created her newest series of works, entitled HEATWAVE. The new pieces reflect both this sensation of exuberance and light, but also seem to suggest a type of restraint: where colours appear through gradients and bars, and ombré colours seem to burst from the picture plane. Created during the summer heatwave, the works evoke the brilliant vermilion of a setting sun or rays of light beaming through MacNaughton's studio window.

MacNaughton's work is often about tension – between hard and soft, masculine and feminine, playful and dramatic, but also restraint and freedom. During a residency at PADA Studios in Portugal in the summer of 2019, the artist really began to experiment with the formal properties of her paintings; where restriction gave way to the gestural (and vice versa); the result of this period of play is this series, in which the artist really seems to have reached a new height in her art-making. It seems as though the artist, restricted to the confines of her studio during month-after-month of the pandemic, channeled her dreams, exasperations, and revelations into the painted works. They seem simultaneously joyous, free, but confined, breaking and shifting within their allotted space. Heatwave, the young artist's second solo show with BEERS, began as a group show, but it became evident early on that the works demanded their own space to function within the gallery space. We can't wait to launch our fall programme with these spectacular paintings and – hopefully – give our viewers some freedom to dream along with MacNaughton.



Rising Up (2020). Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122 cm.



Meandering Rivers (2020). Acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122 cm.

KATHRYN MACNAUGHTON

Canadian artist Kathryn MacNaughton deftly interweaves figurative painting with a combination of abstract expressionism, geometric abstraction, and even conventions of the painted still-life into one poetic statement. Here, these forms of figuration and still life have been flattened, like their more abstract counterparts, to face the frontal plane of the canvas. In this sense, the canvas – and the analog process of the painter’s hand – references the computer screen and the digital touch, where these pieces originally begin to take their shape. She states: I wanted my digital work to look raw and handmade. Now that I create “physical” paintings, I want to give the illusion that the work is digital. MacNaughton, who trained and worked as a graphic designer, uses this sort of ‘digital compression’ to her advantage, and one begins to use typically post-analog language when discussing her work: masking, layering, colour-blocking, silhouette. Here these concepts are paired with more Romantic expressive movements: a scribble dances across a bust, outlined in silhouette, which guides the viewer’s eye around the flattened curves as one guides the finger across a map. The work simultaneously houses a sensuality one aligns with gender tropes: as suggestions of feminine curves play shadow-tricks, appearing as vessels or curtains that guide the eye, but also obscure and reveal the picture plane while painterly splatters and curves leap behind and before the picture plane. But also the masculine, referencing brutalist and Modernist architecture: the austerity and monolithic qualities of shape, form, and line, or perhaps even the sharp angles of cacti in the desert. We see references from Robert Morris to Georgia O’Keefe; Diebenkorn to DiChirico, and even a cheeky reference to the highly stylized drawings of Patrick Nagel (more colloquially known as the artist who made Playboy ‘drawings’ iconic of the entire 1980s). The work therefore works in polarities: analog and post-analog mark-making (ie: the painterly and the digital); feminine and masculine; pragmatism and Romanticism; expressiveness and obfuscation; light and dark. There is a sense of theatricality to her revelations, and it is, in every sense, a cheeky play of light and dark versus form and technique, like boxing with one’s own shadow – an art of individual, delicate mastery.

KATHRYN MACNAUGHTON (b. 1985, Toronto, Canada) lives and works in Toronto, Canada. She graduated from Ontario College of Art and Design in 2007. Solo exhibitions include: *‘Intervals’*, BEERS London (2018); *‘Fixed State’*, Bau Xi Gallery, Toronto (2018); *‘Sprang’*, Bau Xi Gallery, Toronto (2016) and *‘Blue Note’*, Huntclub Gallery, Toronto (2015). Group exhibitions include: *‘Organized Chaos’*, Magma Gallery, Bologna, Italy (2019); *‘Pour’*, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York (2019); *‘Your Favourite Artist’s Favourite Artist II’*, Joshua Liner Gallery, New York (2019); *‘Dualities: A Bridge Between Two Worlds’*, Bau Xi Gallery, Toronto (2017); *‘SMASH’*, Gardiner Museum, Toronto (2016) and *‘The One That Got Away’*, Artscape Youngplace, Toronto (2015). Residencies include: Pada Studios, Lisbon (2019). Macnaughton’s work has been featured in publications such as *Elle Magazine*, *District-W Magazine*, and *The Coveteur*. MacNaughton’s second solo with BEERS opens on 11 September 2020.

