

PRESS RELEASE

PUCKER

SARAH FAUX SOLO EXHIBITION AT CAPSULE SHANGHAI, 2018

From June 23rd to July 23rd, 2018, Capsule Gallery is proud to present “Pucker,” American artist Sarah Faux’s first solo exhibition in Asia. Comprised of new paintings in oil as well as canvas collages, “Pucker” encompasses Faux’s longstanding reflection on the female body and intimacy experience, while highlighting her recent experiments with color, materials, and composition.

In her paintings, Sarah Faux merges the seemingly disparate strands of figurative representation and gestural abstraction to construct sensual situations where raw female bodies drift in a state of liminality. That the protagonist is always female, only occasionally in the company of the other sex, is the artist’s *modus operandi* in this body of work, a deliberate response to an artistic tradition in which the female form is often subjected to fetishization and objectification. But rather than taking a combative position to opt for affirmative representation, Faux conjures bodies that revel in the private moments of a beauty routine, as in *Wet Mirror and Broad Daylight* and *Thin Air* (both works 2018), or in erotic bliss, as in *White Smoke Rose* (also 2018). These invocations of willing consumption—of beauty products and eros—complicate what female agency means in today’s neoliberal world.

Faux crops her subjects to focus on specific body parts, a compositional strategy that pulls the audience into an intimate, first-person perspective. Unable to identify a pronounced figure, we find ourselves gazing into flattened fields of color, parsing the faintly discernible scenes with a curious grin. In looking at these disjointed, fragmented bodies, a public site is activated: we begin to confront and unlearn the shame we have towards our sexuality (and our assumptions of female sexuality), and actively fill in the gaps with our own memories and fantasies.

Biology reminds us that the body is anything but an impenetrable, closed form. Instead, it is elastic and malleable, prone to shifting to conform to its social surroundings. This is further complicated by fluctuating emotional experiences that constantly disrupt one’s conscious experience of a continuous self. What fascinates Faux is precisely those moments when boundaries between states of being dissolve, a dialectic of absorption and dispersion where sensory wires are crossed and confused. In composing the recent works on view, Faux developed an absorbent gesso to prime the canvas. After a first layer of loose line drawing, she pours large amount of paint onto the canvas, which she then quickly scrapes away. The result is a highly flat surface where stimuli from the surrounding environment penetrate the contour of the body and subtly seep into her skin; these bodies, in the same manner, exude emotional flickers that tone the exterior. By flirting with our sense of positive and negative space, Faux’s evocative color compositions weave together charged imagery where the boundaries between inside and outside dissipate.

Roland Barthes famously read the late French writer George Bataille’s erotic classic, *Story of the Eye* (1928), as a series of vignettes threaded together to allow two metaphors—that of the globular and the liquid—to recur.^[1] Without spoiling the fun of perusing these paintings, one might step into Faux’s erotic world in a similar fashion, through a stream of ocular parts: a hoop, an eye, or more sensitive parts. Faux’s paintings viscerally absorb us into a liminal space, only to let us return with shimmering intimacy.

-- Alvin Li

[1] “The Metaphor of the Eye,” Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard, Northwestern University Press: 1972, P241.