

SHARA HUGHES

May 10 – June 23, 2018

Berggruen Gallery is pleased to present *Shara Hughes: Sticks and Stones*, an exhibition of twelve recent paintings by American painter and printmaker, Shara Hughes. This show marks Hughes's first solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view May 10 through June 23, 2018. The gallery will host a reception for the artist on Thursday, May 10 from 5:00 to 8:00pm.

Shara Hughes is widely recognized for her inventive landscape paintings and interiors, which probe the boundary between representation and abstraction through an embrace of the artist's own subconscious. Hughes's paintings exude a psychological complexity that derives from an idiosyncratic coalescence of memory, observation, and illusionism. The artist brings to life a world that is elegantly chaotic – infused with a vibrant harmony of the organic, the objective, and the surreal. Sinuous forms and spatial distortions coincide with expressive brushstrokes and a vivid color palette to exude an illusionistic sense of whimsy that is simultaneously otherworldly and familiar.

Hughes's futuristic landscapes recall the illusory outdoor environments of Charles Burchfield, where evocative, semiabstract forms express a mystical sensitivity to weather and light, yet her vibrant palettes create a joyful atmosphere reminiscent of Matisse's Fauvist landscapes. Color becomes a potent vehicle for expression, rousing and electrifying the enigmatic, organic forms of the natural world. Similar to Matisse or Derain, Hughes delineates forms by engaging with vibrant fields of color and acute transitions in tonality, while she simultaneously structures her compositions through the application of color with bold, isolated brushstrokes. The artist's gestural mark-making emphasizes the material qualities of her medium, as frenetic marks and thick, impasto brushstrokes create a rhythmic sense of movement and flux that is at once poetic and chaotic.

Hughes portrays the outdoors through a mode of visual experimentation combining both qualities of the observed world in conjunction with a psychological and spiritual rendering of its sensory effects. Her vivid engagement with color and light through the application of energetic brushstrokes takes a cue from the Impressionists' and Post-Impressionists' plein air paintings, yet Hughes' landscapes express an aesthetic and thematic individuality in their uniquely eccentric celebration of the spontaneous and variable outdoors. Her discovery of nature's capricious sense of whimsy opens the door to a host of aesthetic possibilities, thus renewing and refreshing the genre of landscape painting to embody a contemporary world.

Enigmatic, sinuous forms – swaying tree trunks, curvaceous waterfalls, rippling clouds – coincide with unexpected exercises in color – an aquamarine moon, a lavender-tinted stream, or a crimson sun. Meanwhile, the artist's visual manipulation of depth and space abolishes traditional approaches to landscape composition in favor of a surreal, psychedelic spectacle that challenges and surprises the human eye. Shifting perspectives, flattened fields of color, and expressive brushstrokes emphasize the visual idiosyncrasies of each environment, offering an intimate sense of place that incites contemplation and curiosity. Straying from conventional spatial relationships involving strict delineations of foreground, middleground, and background, Hughes engages with a myriad of framing strategies to invite the viewer into a surrealist, prismatic semblance of reality, using dramatic curvilinear silhouettes and organic shapes as visual entry points. In turn, her representations of the natural world act as portals for psychological discovery, inviting her audience to tap into the artist's subconscious – a miscellaneous interchange of aesthetic and sensory perception, where fantasy and reality coalesce to incite a unique impression of the outside world.

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Shara Hughes was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1981. She earned a B.F.A. from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2004 before studying at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Hughes has achieved numerous awards and residencies, including a room of her work at the 2017 Whitney Biennial at The Whitney Museum of Art, New York; the Joan Mitchell Fellowship to attend the Vermont Studio Center in 2007; the Anderson Ranch Artist Residency in Snowmass, CO, in 2005; the Vermont Studio Center Artist and Writers Residency Fellowship Award in 2005; and the Florence Leif Painters Award at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2004. Hughes's work belongs to numerous prominent museum collections including the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; the Denver Museum of Art, Denver; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the Jorge M. Perez Collection, Miami; the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Saatchi Gallery, London; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; and the Whitney Museum of Art, New York. Hughes lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Shara Hughes: Sticks and Stones, May 10 – June 23, 2018. On view at 10 Hawthorne Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Images and preview are available upon request. For all inquiries, please contact the gallery by phone (415) 781-4629 or by email info@berggruen.com.

Gallery Hours: Monday – Friday, 10:00am – 6:00pm
Saturday, 11:00am – 6:00pm

About Berggruen Gallery

John Berggruen first opened his pioneering gallery in the spring of 1970 on Grant Avenue in downtown San Francisco. Berggruen Gallery opened in its new 10,000-square-foot space at 10 Hawthorne Street, an historic three-story brick building across from the recently expanded San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, on January 13, 2017. The gallery specializes in contemporary art and 20th-century American and European paintings, drawings, sculpture, and limited edition prints. The gallery exhibits the work of major American post-war artists as well as established and emerging contemporary artists, such as Alicia McCarthy, Julie Mehretu, Richard Serra, Mark Tansey, George Condo, Bridget Riley, and Tauba Auerbach. In addition, Berggruen Gallery presents curated exhibitions of historic works by artists, including those of the Bay Area Figurative movement, such as Richard Diebenkorn, Nathan Oliveira, and David Park, as well as Alexander Calder, Willem de Kooning, Mark di Suvero, Ellsworth Kelly, Henri Matisse, Georgia O'Keeffe, Ed Ruscha, Frank Stella, and Wayne Thiebaud.