

## Art Monte-Carlo

Booth B4, 26–28 April 2019



**Alice Neel**, *Girl with Pink Flower*, 1940s  
Oil on canvas  
61.3 x 45.4cm  
24 1/8 x 17 7/8 in  
© The Estate of Alice Neel  
Courtesy the Estate of Alice Neel and Victoria Miro, London/Venice

**Victoria Miro participates in Art Monte-Carlo (Booth B4) with works by Hernan Bas, Varda Caivano, Secundino Hernández, Ilse D'Hollander, Isaac Julien, Yayoi Kusama, Alice Neel, Tal R and Sarah Sze.**

**Hernan Bas'** painting *Cambridge Nightclimbers*, 2017, derives from a period of research while the artist was in residence at Jesus College Cambridge. During this extended stay the artist developed new subject matter including the famed 'Night Climbers of Cambridge', a group of students whose nocturnal ascents of the ancient buildings of the university and town, taking photographs while trying to avoid detection, gained them a cult following during the early decades of the twentieth century. Drawing the eye upwards with the pronounced vertical format of this work, Bas recasts his climbers as contemporary figures in hoodies and T-shirts, scaling the city's ancient buildings before an almost Cubist arrangement of rooftops.

Inviting prolonged scrutiny, **Varda Caivano's** art repays with intimate evocations that shift and grow with each viewing. The London-based artist's paintings are undeniably of themselves, yet they are also, unavoidably, touched by and suggestive of the wider world. In reference to her handling of painting, Caivano has spoken of an affinity with the writer Georges Perec's poetic litanies of the everyday tasks of dwelling, their layers evoking the textures of experience: '...checking trying out changing fitting signing waiting imagining inventing... splitting turning returning...' While some works, such as *Untitled*, 2009, are characterised by rich, sonorous hues, in others, such as *Untitled*, 2017, colour has been pared back to relatively subdued shades of grey, blue and brown. Heightening the work's graphic qualities, and the attendant exploratory character of drawing, these paintings pivot between structure and openness, bringing to mind the *pentimenti* familiar in Medieval and Renaissance oil painting while retaining a restless, searching quality unique to the artist.

One of the most dynamic painters of his generation, **Secundino Hernández** is celebrated for a spirited enquiry into the language, history and enduring potential of abstraction. *Untitled*, 2017, continues his investigation into the vocabulary of painting – line, form, gesture – and historical classifications of the medium to create images that, radiating a sense of urgency, explore not only their own process of creation but our responses to a painted surface. This large-scale work pivots between spontaneity and improvisation, action and reflection and is a

rich confluence of processes – including areas created through a process of washing the canvas with a jet of water. The resulting work possesses a dramatic, exploratory quality and openly displays the triumphs and challenges of the artist’s practice. Discussing the tension between calculation and spontaneity in the painting, the artist says: ‘When the works succeed, I see a dance between pictorial languages and a balance between something which is very much under control and something else which is unplanned.’

The presentation features a number of gouache-on-paper works by the late Belgian artist **Ilse D’Hollander**. In her short life, D’Hollander (1968–1997) created an intelligent, sensual and highly resonant body of work, drawing upon her impressions and experience of place, particularly the Flemish countryside where she spent the last, highly productive years of her life, to produce paintings and works on paper that reveal a masterful command of graphic and painterly touch. Her work can be read as a series of accumulated impressions, adjustments and layerings – visual records of the artist’s thought processes as much as evocations of the landscapes she knew and loved.

In recent photo-collage works, **Isaac Julien** revisits and expands upon his influential 2004 work *Encore II (Radioactive)*, a short film inspired in part by the acclaimed science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler (1947–2006). Julien’s collages stage a solitary heroine, a cyborg called Lilith Iyapo, who is performed by Vanessa Myrie in Julien’s film. In these works, Lilith’s ‘avatar’ nature and human and mechanical origins, as well as a feeling of dislocation, are heightened by the dramatic use of collage, where enigmatic figurative and abstract elements are brought together on metallic foils to evoke a hybrid materiality and an unreal, dream-like effect.

**Yayoi Kusama**’s paintings *THE SEASON CAME WITH TEARS*, 2015, and *GREEN PLAIN*, 2012, are important examples of her magnum opus of recent works, *My Eternal Soul*, a vibrant flowering of an artist whose illustrious career is characterised by a constantly evolving enquiry into the twin themes of cosmic infinity and personal obsession. Completed in contrasting greens, oranges and reds, the paintings feature iconic motifs in Kusama’s art – such as the dot, eyes and humans faces, as well as other more indeterminate forms recalling cell structures. The paintings are at once microscopic and macroscopic, bringing to mind ancient landscapes and grand geological patterns but equally concerned with the mind and body.

**Alice Neel**’s *Girl with Pink Flower*, 1940s, was painted during an especially productive period for the artist. A woman with a strong social conscience and equally strong left-wing beliefs, Neel moved from the relative comfort of Greenwich Village to Spanish Harlem in 1938 in pursuit of what she described as ‘the truth’. There she painted friends, neighbours, casual acquaintances and people she encountered on the street among the immigrant community, such as the unnamed *Girl with Pink Flower*. The paintings highlight both the innate diversity of Neel’s approach to portraiture and the extraordinary diversity of twentieth century New York City.

**Tal R**’s *Babylon*, 2017, is drawn from a series of works in which the Copenhagen-based artist brings a quizzical eye to the largely unconscious actions of seduction, desire and gratification. As source material, Tal R gathers images of sex clubs, massage parlours, strip clubs, adult theatres and other red-light establishments from around the world. Largely devoid of people, the paintings imply meetings – perhaps between viewer and a potential object of desire – that take place beyond the façade, beyond the surface of the canvas. For the artist, that which is on display is only successful in as much as it activates the imagination, hinting at something tantalisingly out of reach; in the ‘back room’ as the artist says – unseen and unknown. Keeping us on the outside is a deliberate creative strategy. We are shut out by closed doors and frosted windows, which he paints with varying degrees of abstraction in dazzlingly seductive hues.

**Sarah Sze**’s *Afterimage* works comprise paintings integrated within and amongst a constellation of their own archival references and materials, revealing the processes of their making and questioning how meaning is ascribed to individual works of art. Traces of multiple image-making mediums are layered in the work, such as the ghost images of etching, the skidding surface of silkscreen printing, the layering cuts of collage, the dripping and brushing of paint, the exposure by light of photographs, the digital disturbance of computer processing, and the flickering movement of film. These images shift in scale, fade, disappear, re-emerge, creating a storyboard of how an image is burned into memory and persists over time.

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