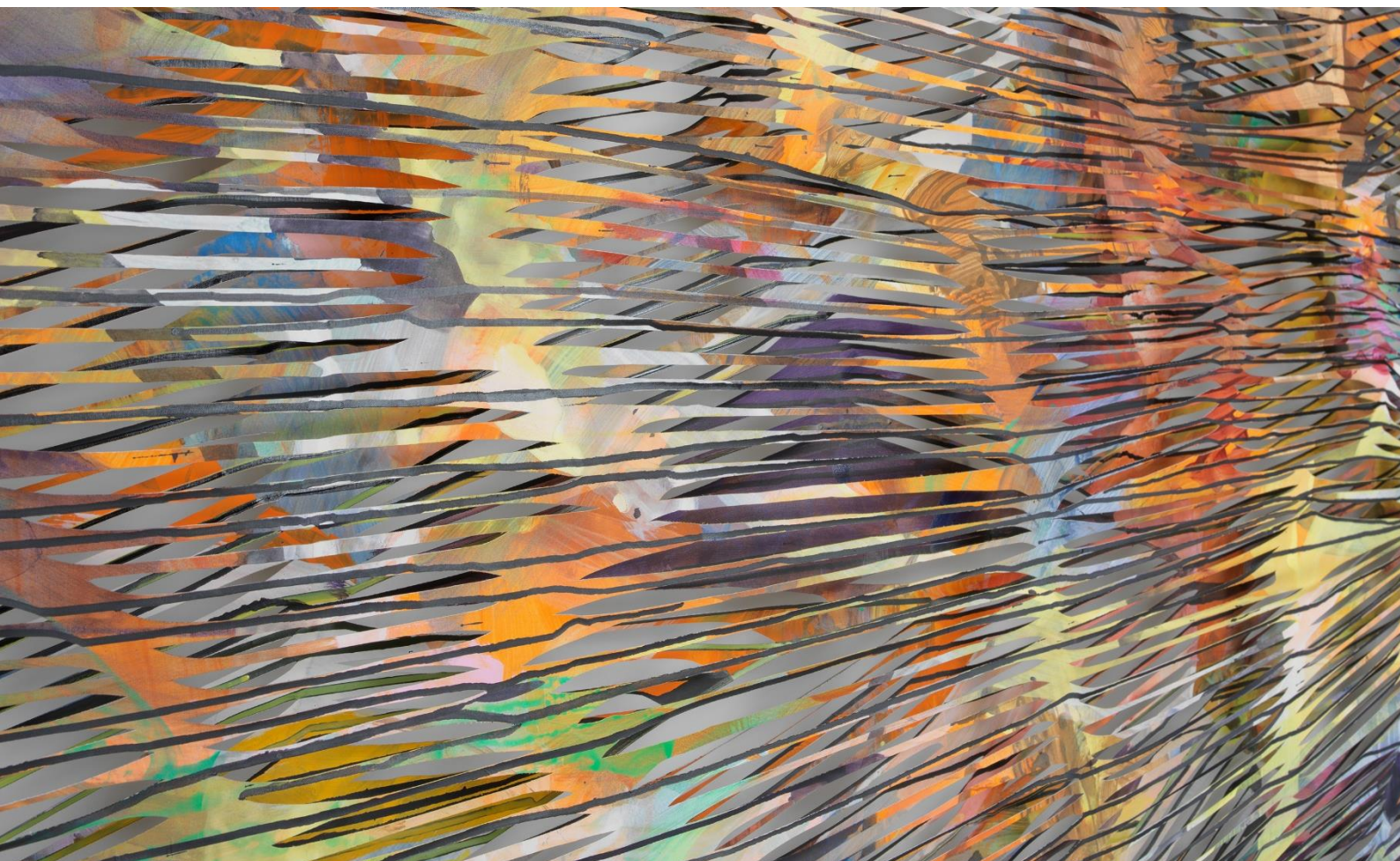


GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



GEORGIA RUSSELL

Cells of Light

09.09 – 16.10.2022

Press kit

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Artist's quotes

"I cut and slice the paper and play with the gradations of tones, punctuated by the movement of my incisions in which the light seeps in."

"My work is the result of accumulations of cuttings. The repetition creates emptiness and matter. These repetitive marks produce a three-dimensional surface or object. I work mainly on a surface that reveals some of the former information."

"[Colour is] a living and moving matter which, like water or wind, has its own life."

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Artist's studio in Méru, Oise. Photo : Nicolas Brasseur.

Biography

Georgia Russell was born in Elgin, Scotland, in 1974. She studied fine art at the University of Aberdeen, then at the Royal College of Art in London, where she obtained a Master of Arts. By means of a grant awarded to her by the Royal College of Art, the artist settled in Paris in 2000. Georgia Russell has participated in many international exhibitions, particularly at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museum of Arts and Design in New York and the Bellevue Arts Museum in Washington, D.C. In 2014, she was named “Artist of the Year” at the Art Basel fair. In 2015, the Het Noordbrabants museum (Raenschdael Foundation) in Bois-Le-Duc, Netherlands, dedicated a solo exhibition to her. In 2016, her work was exhibited at the Bayer Kultur foundation in Leverkusen and the Museum Pfalzgalerie in Kaiserslautern, Germany. She was the winner of the *Paper Routes* – Women to Watch 2020 exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. Major private and public collections have acquired her works, including those of the aforementioned museums and the Centre Georges Pompidou, the Collection Pierre Bergé and the Collection Ruinart. The artist lives and works in Méru, to the north of Paris. She has been represented by Galerie Karsten Greve since 2010.

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Georgia Russell

Untitled

2022

Acrylic and gouache on canvas

200 x 250 x 14 cm

Photo: Gilles Mazzuferri

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Cells of Light

Galerie Karsten Greve is delighted to present *Cells of Light*¹, the new solo exhibition by Scottish artist Georgia Russell. Graeme Bezanson composed a poem that echoes her recent works, which is displayed at the gallery for this occasion. The itinerary of the exhibition offers visitors a stroll between enlightenment and questions regarding the current world, in which the natural and the artificial are more enmeshed than ever.

“*Cells*” are organic, living tissue – life. The cells of hives. But also celluloid, the first plastic material invented in 1856. Then there are monks’ cells, small rooms, places of confinement for prisoners. Or, on the contrary, a cell can refer to a group of individuals. Lastly, the word is present in ‘cell phone’, a device that accompanies us everywhere, all the time, from the crowds of cities to remote locations. From this word stem as many possibilities as differences.

“*I cut and slash the paper and play with gradations of shades, rhythmized by the motions of my incisions, through which light filters in,*” Georgia Russell said of her work. By incising surfaces, she creates a mirage between reality and illusion. From minute, repetitive cuts, protean works are born, the abstraction of which calls upon the subconscious and flirts with the imagination. Her work embodies the permeability of matter. “*The world is not any less beautiful for being known only through a slit or a hole in a plank*”², wrote Henry David Thoreau. The slits in Russell’s canvases can be seen as portals to other universes, flow-through cells for air and light.

Georgia Russell’s surgically precise gestures require mastery and patience. “*I change blades every five minutes, because any more and they are no longer efficient enough.*” Recently, the artist introduced a new matter into her work: organza, a synthetic fabric made from silk, industrially dyed with a hypnotic iridescence, as resistant as it is fragile. The slashing effect of the scalpel on both layers of the translucent fabric pushes optical confusion to the extreme and amplifies the lightness and delicacy of her works. The boundary between solidity and void fades, leaving the eye to lose itself in the movement and light. With Georgia Russell, incising and cutting thus become creative, and not destructive, acts.

In this configuration, the void makes the bright flashes of colour essential to animating canvases perceptible, just as windows traversed by light project their colourful image, created through human skill.

¹ Translated from French into English by the translator.

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

For Georgia Russell, it is a “*living, moving matter, which, like water or the wind, possesses its own life*”. She lets colour pollinate the surface of her canvases – yellow, pink, purple... Intuitively, the artist gathers her hues in a true kaleidoscope. Meticulous observation reveals the gestures of the painter: the colours and strokes of her brush, which animate the surface of her works.

Inspired by nature and its incessant metamorphoses, the artist confronts reality and imbues her work with her most private thoughts on the changes of nature as it is rocked by human activity. Delicate shades shift towards a more saturated chromatic scale, alternating organic and artificial hues. Her palette changes in symbiosis with the environment, which Graeme Bezanson echoes in his poem:

*“Everything is still too wet and heavy
disorienting air thick with pollen
Internet coursing through gaps between
tree trunks I am taking the same walk
again over and over down through
the valley out to the old pond in case
it helps somehow or I guess in case there
is no such thing as repetition”*

In this exhibition, Georgia Russell demonstrates a new maturity in her approach. Her universe adapts to change while preserving wonder and poetry. The cells incised in the canvas or organza let in light and air, which cannot be contained, becoming true *Cells of Light*.

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Georgia Russell

Untitled

2022

Organza mounted on stretchers

201 x 201 x 10 cm

Photo : Gilles Mazzuferri

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Georgia Russell

Untitled

2022

Acrylic and gouache on canvas

150 x 180 x 16,5 cm

Photo: Gilles Mazzuferri

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Georgia Russell

Untitled

2022

Acrylique et gouache sur organza, tendu sur châssis

201 x 201 x 10 cm

Photo : Gilles Mazzuferri

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz

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It can be hard to find the footpath until you're already on it:
Through the tall and stooping sweetgrass stitchwort yarrow
blackcaps ajuga broom and brambles My phone suggesting
the names of things with uncanny confidence Ragged texture
of fern and stinging nettle Nervous texture Distant hum of a
truck shifting through octaves approaching an unseen hill
Everything is still too wet and heavy disorienting air thick with
pollen Internet coursing through gaps between tree trunks I
am taking the same walk again over and over down through
the valley out to the old pond in case it helps somehow or I
guess in case there is no such thing as repetition

The days are tall but unsolemn Unpainted sky High dome of
birdsongs Oak crowns reaching out to oak crowns Greens
which as they approach each other shift in tone become wilder
Anarchical pigeons jump-scare each other and crash off
through the overstory I cross my own footprints Beginning to
recognize wood spurge and asphodel or is it not asphodel Find
tadpoles in the forest's copper puddles Georgia sends a photo
of a large blue picture small child with arms wide in front of it
for scale The first plants my kids knew were nettles then mint
then nettles

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The grass is higher this morning maybe grows faster in
nighttime Sunbeams creep across shadows Slight breeze
overhead but I can't feel it Swishing leaves that speak only in
their own voices maybe imply nothing beyond their own
presence On her birthday my daughter barrelled downhill and
became tangled in a net of nettles Little gasping fish Unsolved
problem of the birdsongs which clash or move with uneasy
harmonies repaired and rebroken The sky is alive or nearly
alive Pink streak of an airplane at sundown Soft crackling of a
blade through fabric opening cells of light

The path is made and remade continually Brome and false
brome Landes pine and Aleppo The trees are alike or nearly
alike or maybe just different enough so as to bring each other
into being Birds fall like a black net I wake my phone and ask
what it is I'm seeing Send Georgia the things I'm working on
Tell how my kids keep weaving grasses keep collecting the
brightest dandelions like amulets against disaster Will the
stars fall to earth How far can a seed blow I retrace my steps
until gradually the treetops become indistinguishable from
actual sky One thing following another into the blue-stained
night

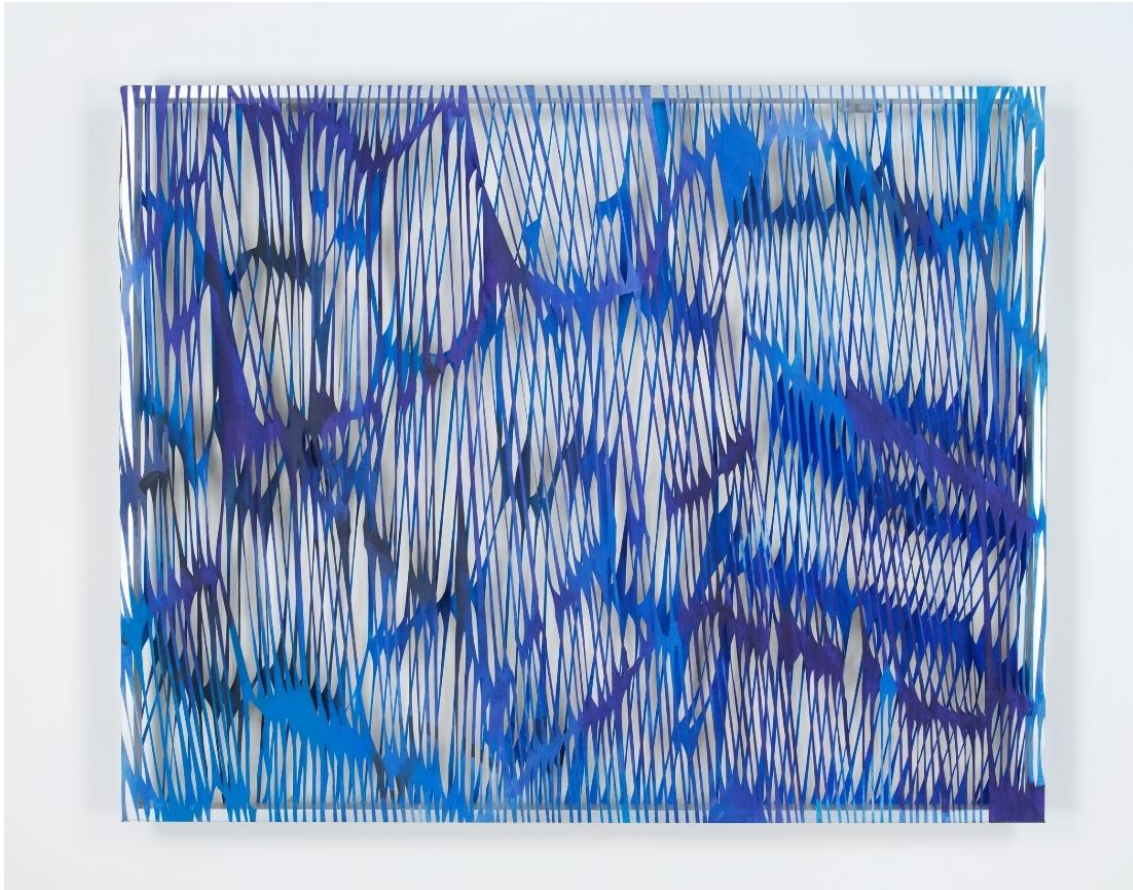
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Can everything the light touches become light Last night's rain
slips off angelica speedwell and daisies The fish in the pond
are euphoric surging gap-mouthed through the twinkling
surface Dispatching tiny packets of waves Neon streaks of
pollen Beercans and shotgun shells glinting in the hollows
beneath brambles The path widens as it goes deeper into the
woods and incorporates more Trees scattering down white
and speculative pinks Sun pouring purple into shadows Little
crescent moons on the black earth Notice for the first time how
the young oaks all lean southward back towards home as if
straining to hear my children murmuring in their sleep

Mist spills down the hillside A million May beetles careen
through twilight hoping to collide with anything each other
We pass through veils of light and shadow which slip closed
behind us The same wave ripples the grasstops the poplars
and colza as if everything goes onward and outward forever
as if nothing collapses Only the seasons are contracting now
The rocks softening The moon is ash-coloured and has no sting
left in it My phone pings gently in my pocket as if to reassure
that we can be like the silver leaves which cast light on each
other and turn each other into light

Graeme Bezanson, *Cells of Light*, 2022.

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Georgia Russell

Untitled

2022

Acrylic and gouache on canvas

116 x 148 x 9 cm

Photo : Gilles Mazzuferri

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz



GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE



Georgia Russell

Accidenté II

2021

Acrylic and gouache on canvas, mounted on aluminium frame

190 x 140 x 3 cm / 74 3/4 x 55 x 1 1/4 in

Photo : Gilles Mazzuferri

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Biography

- 1974 Born in Elgin, Scotland
- 1991 Aberdeen College, Foundations in Art & Design, Aberdeen, Scotland
- 1997 Robert Gordons University, BA Fine Art Printmaking 1st Class Hons, Aberdeen, Scotland
- 2000 Royal College of Art, Master of Arts, London, England
- Georgia Russell lives and works in Méru, in France.

Public Collections

- Bayer Kultur, Leverkusen, Germany
- Museum Pfalzgalerie, Kaiserslautern, Germany
- Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England
- Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, Belgium
- Aberdeen Hospitals, Aberdeen, Scotland
- Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
- Collection Ruinart, Reims, France
- Pierre Bergé Collection, Paris, France
- Stichting Paul van Rensch Art Foundation, Horst, The Netherlands

Awards and Residencies

- 2019 Laureate of the 2020 Edition of *Women to Watch / Paper Routes*, National Museum of Women Artists, Washington D.C., USA
- 2014 Artist of the Year, Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland
- 2005 Arts and Craft in Architecture Award, The Saltire Society, NHS Grampian, Scotland
- 2004 Residency at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
- 2001 Residency Miller Holmes Paris Studio, Paris, France
- 2000 Aurora Prize for Fine Art, Royal College of Art, London, England

Commissions

- 2014 Ruinart – creation of an ornament for the Blanc des Blancs bottle of champagne from the house

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Public space commissioned works (selection)

- 2004/05 *Uncover – Discover*, (collaboration with Benetts Associates Architects), Jubilee Library,
Brighton & Hove City Council, Brighton, England
- Untitled*, (in collaboration with EPR Architects), Cardinal Place, London, England

Solo shows (selection)

- 2022 Galerie der Stadt Tuttlingen, Tuttlingen, Germany
- Cells of Light*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 2021 *Ajouré*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Germany
- 2020 *Georgia Russell*, Galerie Karsten Greve AG, St. Moritz, Switzerland
- 2019 *Paintings*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 2017 *Georgia Russell. The Open Windows*, Kunstverein Ludwigsburg, Ludwigsburg, Germany
- 2016 *Georgia Russell. Time and Tide*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- Mit dem Messer gezeichnet. Skulpturen und Bildkörper von Georgia Russell*, Museum Pfalzgalerie,
Kaiserslautern, Germany
- Zeichnen mit dem Messer. Skulpturen und Bildkörper von Georgia Russell*, Bayer Kultur,
Leverkusen, Germany
- 2015 *Georgia Russell. Kunst met een scalpel / Art with a Scalpel*, Het Noordbrabants Museum, 's-
Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands
- Georgia Russell*, Lippische Gesellschaft für Kunst e. V., Schloss Detmold, Germany
- 2014 *Ruinart & Art – Artist of the Year. Georgia Russell*, Art Basel Miami Beach, Miami, USA
- 2013 *Georgia Russell. Forms of Belief*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Germany
- 2011 *Georgia Russell. Difference et Repetition*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- Georgia Russell. Cutting Through Time*, England & Co., London, England
- 2010 *Georgia Russell. Contemporary Art by Angela Li*, Hong Kong, China
- Georgia Russell*, Dukan & Hourdequin, Marseille, France
- 2009 *Recent Work*, England & Co., London, England
- 2005 *Recent Work*, England & Co., London, England
- Georgia Russell*, The American University of Paris, Paris, France
- 2003 *Paper Constructions*, England & Co., London, England
- 2002 *Paper Constructions & Bookworks*, England & Co., London, England
- 1997 *Georgia Russell. Honeymoon*, Under the Hammer, Aberdeen, Scotland

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Group shows (selection)

- 2022 *Bibliomania – das Buch in der Kunst*, Kunstmuseum Villa Zanders, Bergisch Gladbach, Germany
- 2021 *Quand la matière devient art*, Maison Guerlain, Paris, France
- 2019 *Embodied Landscape*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
- 2017 *Pick & Pocket. Small is Beautiful*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Germany
Château Kairos. Cueillir l'éternité dans l'instant, Kasteel van Gaasbeek, Gaasbeek, Belgium
- 2016 *Summer Show*, Galerie Karsten Greve AG, St. Moritz, Switzerland
Summer Show, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Germany
- 2015 *Beyond Horizon. Reflexion on the horizontal line*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
Odd Volumes: Book Art from the Allan Chasanoff Collection, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, USA
- 2014 *AD Intérieurs 2014*, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France
Accrochage, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
Artist Rooms, Galerie Karsten Greve, Cologne, Germany
- 2013 *Accrochage*, Galerie Karsten Greve AG, St. Moritz, Switzerland
- 2012 *Sculptures*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
The First Cut, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester, England
- 2010 *On paper II*, Galerie Karsten Greve, Paris, France
Cabinet de curiosité, ART-O-RAMA, Marseille, France
SCOPE, Dukan & Hourdequin, Basel, Switzerland
New Entries, Dukan & Hourdequin, Marseille, France
- 2009 *Slash: Paper Under the Knife*, Museum of Art & Design, New York, USA
Bientôt 4 ans !, Galerie Dukan & Hourdequin, Marseille, France
Cut It Out: Contemporary Paper Cut Artists, Otter Gallery, Chichester, England
Contained Thoughts, The Courtauld Institute Library Exhibition Space, London. England
The Book Borrowers: Contemporary Artists Transforming the Book, Bellevue Arts Museum, Washington, USA
Novel Ideas, Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada
- 2008 *Culture Bound: Courtauld Institute of Art's East Wing Collection VII*, biennial exhibition in the Institute's East Wing, Somerset House, London, England
Holland Paper Biennial, The Coda Museum, The Netherlands
Imaginative Qualities of Actual things, Price Tower arts Center, Oklahoma, USA
- 2006 *Literary Constructs: Chris Kenny, Liliane Lijn, Arthur Giardelli, Vito Drago, Rupert Spira, Georgia Russell*, England & Co., London, England
- 2005 American University Paris, Paris, France (invited artist)

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

- 2003 *The Map Is Not the Territory III*, curated by Jane England at James Hockey Gallery, SIAD, Farnham, England
Sartorial: an exhibition of conceptual clothing, art & fashion, England & Co., London, England
- 2002 *The Map Is Not the Territory II*, England & Co., London, England
Festival Montmartre en Europe, 18th City Hall, Paris, France
English Heritage, Richmond House Exhibition, London, England
- 2001 *Art Contemporain*, Centre d'art Albert Chanut, Paris, France
Royal Collage, Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, Denmark
Kilometre Zero, Artist Event, Rue de Hironnelle, Paris, France
Postcard Exhibition, Bowie Art at the RCA, London, England
- 2000 *Mercedes Unique Artists Event*, Design Museum, London, England
Mary Queen of Scots, Edinburgh Festival Exhibition, Bourne Fine Art, Edinburgh, Scotland
Anxious Words, Waterstones, Piccadilly, London, England
- 1999 *BBC Accommodation project*, BBC Broadcasting House, London, England



Georgia Russell

Slice VI

2021

Pastel on paper, Plexiglas

55 x 70 x 11.8 cm / 21 2/3 x 27 1/2 x 4 2/3 in

Photo : Gilles Mazzuferri

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz

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FRONTRUNNER

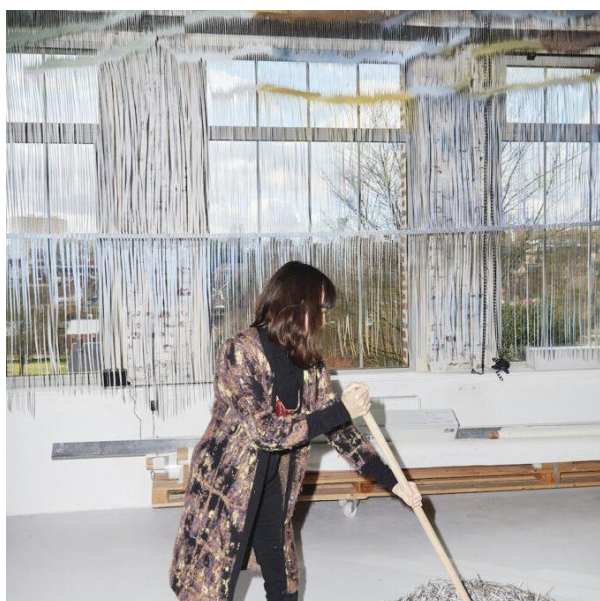
CLEAR CUT: GEORGIA RUSSELL

By Shana Beth Mason, August 12, 2020

There's a certain satisfaction in discovering an artist by mistake, in a gallery you were never meant to be at, in the first place. Stumbling through a miserable heat wave in Cologne, killing time before my departure, I decided to test my luck and walk in – unannounced – to one of the oldest, most venerated contemporary galleries in the world: Galerie Karsten Greve, founded in 1973.

Once inside, I found a room with a series of intricately-cut and coloured canvases...by an artist named Georgia Russell. And from there, the band played on.

Russell was born in Elgin, Scotland in 1974 and studied fine art at the University of Aberdeen. She received her Masters in Printmaking from the Royal College of Art, London. She began her work with books while on an artist residency in Paris. Her works are held in the collections of The Victoria & Albert Museum (London), The Foundation Maison Particulière (Brussels) and the Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris). She has exhibited internationally at venues in New York, Paris, London, Hong Kong, and Edinburgh. She is the 2000 recipient of the Aurora Prize for Fine Art from the RCA (London).



Georgia Russell
From the *Visitor* series (2019)
Photography by Vincent Ferrane

Russell is represented by Galerie Karsten Greve (Paris/St. Moritz/Cologne) and lives and works in Méru, France with her husband, artist Raúl Illarramendi. In a FRONTRUNNER exclusive from our Spring 2020 Issue, Russell cuts to the quick.

What kinds of media did you begin with? The first types I saw at the gallery were mounted to the wall and books...

What you've seen in the catalogues and at the gallery, up until now, has been books...I've dissected books, also paper work and plexi. But now, gradually, over the last year or two I've been moving towards cut canvas. I've always wanted to make paintings, not traditional paintings, because

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

they're cut and made out of layers, and stretched out on completely new frames. Getting out of the plexi, getting into the canvases, painting them with big, gestural marks so that when I come on top with my cut, I'm interrupting all these old gestures with a new gesture. I wanted to create all these different directions interrupted by another thing. Not only layers, but it's kind of abstract expressionist still, hopefully about all these contradictions in gesture.

Does it frustrate you, sometimes, that people compare your work to Lucio Fontana?

'They have, they've done it in an interesting way, like it's Fontana, but definitely not like Fontana [laughs]. I'm cutting canvas, there's the idea of piercing something that's immaculate, making it not immaculate anymore. But when you see them in real life...I guess, I don't really mind it. In the catalogue that's coming out, [one of the writers] mentions Fontana, but it's really nothing like it.

You said interruption, which is a word I love. That's more what I think of. I'm thinking about Fontana in a way that opens the abyss behind the space.

Exactly, yeah.

But when I look at you, it's like space somersaulting over itself, inverting itself.

Thank you so much, that's really perceptive. It's how much space, how much space the void takes up, as well. The whole of the globe is being taken up, spaces overcoming and territories being filled up. And when you see my cuttings, maybe not the first thing you think of, but it's like taking up space or invading a territory that was already there. There's hardly anything left by the actual canvas, sometimes. It's just hanging together by tiny bits of canvas.



Georgia Russell
From the *Visitor* series (2019)
Photography by Vincent Ferrane

The tensile type of quality to it. The most immediate association for me, though, was Mona Hatoum. Her works deal with the invasion of territory; this precision in the way territory is violated. It's that point of no return. You make these calculated decisions about what to leave rather than what to invade. When you're in the process of making these cuts, do you get claustrophobic by the mathematical element of it?

It's not mathematical at all. It's funny because recently I went to see Bernard Frize at the Pompidou. I was beginning to doubt if I liked his work. I went to see it, and was really impressed by his way of painting. He has systems and he follows them. You don't know how he's done it, the colours are really

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

seductive. But by the end of it, what is it that's making me feel tired, sick, vomiting? Like, "I'm going to divide this by three, then by five..." I'm not like that, actually. It's a repetition I'm interested in, but an organic repetition. Half of it's planned, and half of it is very organic. I know when I start what kind of fit I want, but it's got to stay emotional, it's got to stay gestural and expressive. There's a technique, but no mathematical process.

Maybe it's the word precision that, for me, lives side by side with mathematical. It's hard for me to imagine something that precise being emotional. Maybe it's a bit of Fibonacci happening? A bit of precision and chaos?

Maybe, yeah! Somewhere caught between Minimalism and plans. I don't like a Pollock or a Frankenthaler. Caught up in all that, but it's part of a long pathway that one action will lead to another action.

Is it fair to say that you want your hand to be shown?

Yeah, yeah. Something like laser-cutting would be a really ugly effect. I love the little faults, I love the tremors, it's all living. Surface and layering and etching, breaking up spaces, was a good way of creating something. Staying on the same surface, for me, was never enough. By reducing, you're creating so much more. Like opening a can of worms. What's it going to be saying about space and the hand? Time and time passing, and what we do with it. It's all nothing, anyway.

In the early part of your practice, where, as a young artist, there were moments where you might have lost that dialogue? Many young artists don't immediately have that clear idea of their own practice.

You're always chasing something, I'm never really fixed in my ideas, either. You have big moments of doubt, but it's in those moments that something new might come out of it. It's really encouraging when you think, "I can't keep doing this anymore, I have to do something else." It has to be stronger, better. These moments of doubt are essential, but you have to be confident enough to bring down what you made before and make something new. You have to break it apart, start something else.

Did you have a singular breakthrough moment?

Yeah, that would have been in 2000. Probably with the first book piece. I was using old books. I was at the Royal College in London, I was in Paris for my residency, I was only 23 or 24. Hadn't really got an identity of my work at all by then, I was making etchings and films. Then I found all these books, all different writers. In France, you know you're in the city of romance, you think you should be buying all these books and reading them –

And a city of revolution!

Yeah, totally! I just loved them, and they were beautiful. All these brains that were outside just beside the river. Just so poetic. I bought them and started making collages and using them as sketchbooks, just sketching in cafés. I didn't really know what else to do to get me started whilst I was there. These books

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

suddenly became more interesting if I'd left them intact instead of pulling them apart doing collage. I started page by page, making them bigger, they looked like heads. Eventually I got the cut book thing, which you saw. I haven't been doing so much of that recently, but will be going back. Just now, this is enough with the canvases. That would have been the biggest breakthrough for me because suddenly I was thinking you're destroying something, but you're not: is it political? Is it emotional? Is it psychological? It's about text, it's about writing, it's about the brain. There's so many things that it could be about that just interested me. That was a big, key time for me to start the cutting. Proper cutting, and how I would cut.

Not many artists would have the unbelievable opportunity to not only meet, but collaborate with a gallerist like Karsten Greve. Can you talk about how you met?

Yeah, that was a complete fluke. I was teaching part-time and selling through two smaller galleries: one in London and one in Marseille. I was living in France by this time, this was [already] after living in France quite a while. I thought, I'd better start paying my taxes in France, moving myself from Britain, cause I hadn't done it yet. I was always moving back and forward.

So I was looking for an accountant, I asked friends around me if they knew an accountant and somebody by chance knew one, who was Bustamante's accountant. I thought, "He's not going to work for me. I'm this tiny little..." They said, "No, no, no, he's very cool, he's very young. He's nice." The accountant came to meet me and said, "Oh, I really like your work. I'll be your accountant, it's only going to take me half an hour!" [Laughs] He said, "Give me some of your images, I'll show them to some of the galleries I work with." We became friends, and not long after – six months later – I got a call from Judith Greve. I was like, "Is this a fake call?" She was like, "Our accountant showed me some of your images. It was a while ago now, but I just haven't had the time to get back to you. Can I come and visit your studio?" So it was Judith who came to my tiny little studio in Paris, and invited me to show in a group show at the gallery, *Works on Paper*. I was like, "[Gasps], Oh my God!" I was showing beside Louise Bourgeois, I was like, "Oh, I have to step up my game, here!" Luckily I had been working pretty hard and I had been doing part-time work to pay the rent, but I'd never let it go. I always kept working. I was ready when that opportunity came around.

And thanks to the smaller galleries that had kept me going, too, because it was kind of fantastic that I was ready. After that, I was invited to show at FIAC, Judith left the gallery and luckily decided to keep going with us. It's been, like, seven – eight – nine years, or something? When I met him, I couldn't even talk! Like, "Are you sure about this?" He's a character. He doesn't speak a lot. Who I did meet recently who really impressed me was [Nicholas] Fox Weber (Director of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation).

Let's go back to the physicality of your work. What's the next direction for you?

I'm so into these canvases, so I'm going to be making more of these. The next step is making big paintings, more layers, more structural. Continuing with these ideas, they move around a bit. A bit minimal.

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

You showed me one work that registers a kind of red, like it's muscle tissue! It's awesome.



Georgia Russell
The Rains (2019)
Acrylic and gouache on canvas
150 x 120 x 12.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

That's true! Two layers, one layer and a layer behind. They're set off the wall, so there is a kind of floating feeling about them. They're going to be cut, half-cut, with things protruding out of them, out of the folds. So far, it's just really surfaces. Maybe more sculpture, more immersive, more installation-things, as well. Layers you can walk through in the gallery.

Do you feel like the work could approach kinesis?

Yeah, it does, in a way. It's interesting. Nicholas Fox Weber is writing a text for the catalogue which is fantastic. He was overly enthusiastic, which I was taken aback by! He said the first thing was to compare it to a kind of kinetic – this vibration in between the two layers. But it's not mathematical, not like Soto or Cruz-Diez. It happens almost by chance. It's never going to be a constant. You've got to search out and find the kinetic bits. If you change your place in the room, it changes, itself.

The work has a dynamic to it where the viewer and the work, itself, meet in the middle in a fuller way.

It's like something being alive in the room, like a fireplace. I remember saying to [my husband] Raül [Illaramendi] when we moved in here that we can't have a burning-log fire, which I was devastated about. I've got a country home and can't have a fucking log fire! [Laughs] So I said I want a piano in the room, because I want something living. I need a candle-holder, or a fire, or a painting, or a piano, or something. There's a shadow of something that was there in the morning but isn't there in the afternoon. Neither of us play! But I love something about sitting down at a piano, I think it's amazing. I'm so in awe. I found it really hard when I started learning, then I stopped. I think I've always had that regret.

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Speaking of that, are there any ambient sounds or beings in your studio space in order for you to produce?

If I'm painting a big canvas on the floor, I can't listen to the radio. Sometimes when I'm cutting, I can listen to interviews, because I know I'm going to be going up like that. I'll stop and start, but I can kind of listen to the radio when I'm cutting. When I'm painting, I have to have music on to kind of get into my zone. I need to forget the world outside. With cutting, I don't like anyone really being around. Sometimes, though, I don't have a choice because I've got an assistant coming during the day to help me out. Ideally, if I could do everything on my own, I'd love to be able to, but because of the physical sizes and I need to get on with my ideas, I get help to speed it up a bit. But I also love interviews and podcasts, like [on] the Louisiana Channel (Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark).

Sounds boring, but I still love *Pod Save America*. That's the only thing I can listen to nowadays without tasting bile in my mouth. I do get curious about artists' political opinions and whether it filters into their work. Your husband's work does walk into political dialogue, but I feel like yours doesn't in any way.

I can and I can't, there are underlying things going on. I was talking about territory, because it's on my mind and it's on everyone's mind. I'm politically aware, but not at all an expert. I kind of fight with that because I feel like I should be more engaged; should I be doing more? Should I be making a point? I think it would be false for me to start doing work about something. I've been privileged, a privileged upbringing, white, European. I'm here, hopefully, to create a distraction and feelings and wellbeing for people who have suffered. I think there's still space for that. But I'm thinking about territory, thinking about climate change. Thinking about rain and floods and natural things in my work, as well. Some of them are evoking dark sand, no earth and sand anymore. So, it's there, but I'm not obviously doing amazing political pieces. Sometimes – and maybe this sounds completely selfish and horrible of me – but I think, “Can this just not be about anything for a while? Can we not forget all of this horrible stuff?”

I think even just speaking about it amongst ourselves makes it worthwhile.

Yeah. And there are people who do it, and do it extremely well. I just don't think that's my place right now. For Raül, it was burning up in him. He needed to do it. He's been away from the country [Venezuela], and feels terrible about it. But I have to be genuine about the work, about the art. Hopefully it will reflect my time; breaking through layers, there's half-seen things in it. Sometimes I think about how much shit you have to go through to get to the truth. All these layers, and confusions, and interruptions in my work.

If you were talking to an artist ten or fifteen years younger than you, which artists would you like them to discover?

I like Rashid Johnson. The work is so direct and so fast. At the beginning, I wasn't drawn to it, but the more I look and the more I hear him discuss and talk, he's so literate and so good at talking to people. He's very engaging for young artists, too. Etel Adnan, I heard her speak a few years ago. Really inspiring.

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

I'm also curious about your broad opinion on the visibility of women in the arts, since you're our first female cover artist for the magazine.

I tend to lean towards that everyone should be seen as an artist. I think France has been lucky in the fact that Louise Bourgeois was discovered and she's done a whole lot for women, and making people aware of women artists. Tatiana Trouvé, as well. These names come to mind in an equal, French way. British, as well. I think there could be more racial equality in the arts rather than male-female. But I'm not really in the "in crowd", I'm not really one to know who the director of this museum is, or what time, so you probably know more about that than I do. But something else that might interest you, is that I've been selected to show at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC next summer.

Brava!

But I also have to mention Phyllida Barlow, as well. I think her approach is so healthy. I don't know if I like all of the work, when you see it in fairs it doesn't seem to work for me, but that's fairs [laughs].

But regarding the fairs and mega-galleries, do you think these young artists and spaces have a shot now?

I wonder. I hope so. I think the art world is so big that they're going to want new food. The machine has to be fed, so they're going to go out there searching for them. But it's the kind of mid-sized galleries that are all getting pushed out.



Georgia Russell
From the *Visitor* series (2019)
Photography by Vincent Ferrane

How do you feel about young artists being anxious about having to be their own social media manager, their own publicist, having to be everything? Could it be too much?

It can be for some people. Some people are just fantastic at it, these big powerhouses and they seem to be able to do it all. I'm certainly not like that. I'm full up to here already with what I want to do and create and produce in the work, and I don't want that to be part of it. But it could be part of the whole artwork, as well. It's a big choice for everyone to make, they have to look at it sensibly and say, "Is this good for me, or not?"

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

If you could pinpoint it, what is the best piece of advice you've ever received as an artist?

Someone told me once, "Never doubt." Because that's all we do. But it gave me that tilt as to say, you know, "Fuck it." If I make this and it doesn't work, fuck it, it doesn't matter. Let go of your control that you want over the work. Let yourself do the mediocre stuff for awhile to get up higher. Just never doubt.

As a fun question, do your kids ever help you develop new things in your work?

Yeah! Definitely. For some, it may be a handicap and I'm sure it has been both. But my second child, who I just had two years ago – that was too late to have a child, stupid idea! [Laughs] – he made me stop because I had a mild depression, and anxiety attacks, just from being a mum. He made me stop for a year, and then I was even more fervent to get back. I couldn't wait to get back. I was so lucky. My daughter sometimes says, "Mummy, don't cut that up. Leave it." You know they say animals and children always tell the truth. I listen to them.

Georgia Russell appears on the cover of the FRONTRUNNER Spring 2020 Issue.



Georgia Russell

Slive IV

2021

Pastel on paper, Plexiglas

76 x 56 x 11.8 cm / 30 x 22 x 4 2/3 in

Photo : Gilles Mazzuferri

Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

ALURING*

T H E A R T S C E N E

EXPOSITIONS BUREAU

GEORGIA RUSSELL - PAINTINGS

AUGUST 23, 2019

A la galerie KARSTEN GREVE au 5, rue Debelleye 75003 Paris /// Du 14 septembre au 26 octobre 2019 /// Exposition : GEORGIA RUSSELL - PAINTINGS

"Je suis de nature impatiente..." Finit-elle pas lâcher ponctuant sa confession d'un rire charmant. Pour elle la rationalité de l'être humain est impuissante face à la magnificence des phénomènes naturels. Son oeuvre nous berce par la gestualité rythmique du pinceau et du scalpel. Cette dernière nous évoque aussi - de manière plus lointaine - ses travaux antérieurs de découpe de photographies qui créaient alors une image dans l'image. L'artiste revient ici sur les atmosphères de sa terre natale. En effet Georgia Russell (Photo ci-dessous Crédit@GillesMazzufferi) se trouve à un nouveau chapitre de son aventure picturale avec une peinture devenant presque monochrome. Les tonalités majeures de vert, de bleu et de gris dévoilent une chorégraphie de la main virtuose. Le visiteur sera très vite conquis par ces toiles exacerbées par une valeur symbolique démultipliant les surfaces et les profondeurs. Et qui déjouent nos facultés visuelles pour mieux les perdre dans un entremêlement de lignes animées d'un ressac intérieur. On aime l'opération d'évidage de la matière au coeur de l'approche plastique de Georgia animée des mouvements rapides de sa main bercée régulièrement - on l'apprendra plus tard - par la musique entraînante du groupe Future Islands. Qui l'inspire toujours et qui lui permet de canaliser son énergie créatrice débordante !

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Anahita's Eye

GEORGIA RUSSELL

Window onto untamed nature

By Anathia's Eye, published in 2019.

Credits : Photos by Anahita Vessier / Text: Anahita Vessier / Editing: Anahita Vessier

URL : <https://anahitaseye.com/tag/georgia-russell/>

To observe Georgia Russell working on her paintings is just fascinating. Originally from Elgin in Scotland, Georgia creates these impressive paintings that remind of the wide and wild grassland of the Highlands moving in the wind with all its colors and luminosity. By cutting out stripes and ornaments on several layers of paper and canvas with a scalpel, she creates these tridimensional effects and her artwork becomes plant-like windows, with light filtering through and offering glimpses of architecture.

Today Georgia lives and works with her husband, the Venezuelan artist Raul Illarramendi, and their two kids next to Paris. Her extraordinary artwork can be seen in shows all round the world as well as in private and public collections, including the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.



You're living and working next to Paris, in Méru. What made you move to Paris after graduating from the Royal College of Art In London?

During my studies at the Royal College I had been selected for a residency at the Cité des Arts Internationale in Paris. During this time, I had started my work on cut books and was sourcing my new material there so it made sense to return once I had

obtained my Masters in London.

That was quite a while ago! Since then you became a successful artist. Currently you're showing your new work at Gallery Karsten Greve in Paris. What was the inspiration behind this exhibition called "Paintings" ?

My most recent exhibition shows a leap from contained artworks in plexiglass to painting on the canvas. Recently I have been inspired by Helen Frankenthaler and her use of both sides of the canvas and Clyfford Still's vertical compositions.

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

I wanted to work larger scale and see what it was to make actual "paintings".

These new large scale paintings become almost sculptures. You're cutting out ornaments and fine lines with a sharp scalpel and then you reconstruct them by inlacing them which creates a very interesting tridimensional effect with a very particular movement. Could you explain a little bit more this concept of « creative destruction » ?

I am interested in negative space and how it changes a material. I don't see it as a destruction but more like a reconstruction.



I am curious about the idea that something has been changed and cannot go back to its original state. Something emotional happens when we realise something is absent. This does not have to be about loss but can evoke feelings of freedom or release.

There is this repetitive gesture that you apply meticulously on your paintings. How does it feel to be concentrated for hours, for days, for weeks on one piece doing the same movement over and over again?

It doesn't seem repetitive to me, there are so many differences in every stroke. I love being concentrated on a composition. The world around disappears and all I think about are the effects of shapes on other shapes, recto versus verso, colours against other colours, negatives beside positives, movement.



This movement in your work is like a choreography of lines and shapes that remind me of Isadora Duncan's modern dance ballets and her words about being an artist « You are once wild, don't let them tame you ». What do you think about this quote?

That's a great quote, I should remember it every day!

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

Your husband is the Venezuelan artist Raul Illarramendi. Do you sometimes ask him for his advice?

Yes, when we have time! Life is pretty busy and speeds past. If I have a real problem or I am not quite sure I always like to talk it through with him.

In your busy schedule as an artist and also as a mother you probably find some time to go to museums and other exhibitions. And what if you were locked up at the Louvre Museum for one night! Which sections would you go to and spend your night?

I normally head to the painting department but recently I went to see the near eastern antiquities where I found the winged human headed bulls called Lamassu or Shedû. Their symbolism and story in history is amazing.



Painting with a Scalpel

By Heinz-Peter Schwerfel, in *Art. Das Kunstmagazin*, 2015

A scalpel is a tool, not a weapon. And yet we still think that slashing a painted canvas is an aggressive act, whether with a scalpel or a knife – unlike artists like Lucio Fontana, who saw slashing as a way of extending space and freeing himself from the two-dimensional. So why do we, as observers, perceive it to be aggressive and destructive? Because we think conservatively? Because art must be something sacred, holy, permanent, untouchable? Or because the thought of a scalpel gets under our skin, representing as it does the surgical aspect of opening up the human body?

A scalpel doesn't cut, it separates. Cleanly, as the surgeons say, without a lot of blood. Human or animal skin, but also fabric, textiles and canvas. A cut with the scalpel creates intact, undamaged fragments with no shredding at all, so you never see the origin, what was once whole, or even any traces of the separation process. What the scalpel separates can be put back together. Repairing, so to speak, a wound without a scar. Unless you transform the wound into a new form, sublimating it into a work of art.

Georgia Russell characterised her working process just a few years ago when she said "Cutting out is a sort of freedom of expression. For me it's drawing, but I draw with a scalpel". Since then there have been changes; her approach has become more complex. Cutting is still a freedom from the two-dimensional form

of painting on panels, away from the constrictions of canvas and the aura of the conventional. Now Georgia

Russell's scalpel is no longer a replacement for a pencil, it is increasingly being replaced by an actual paintbrush. Because Georgia Russell has taken perhaps the boldest step that an artist can take today: she is now painting.

More and more large-scale works are proliferating in her workshop in the north of Paris, hanging freely in the space. Colourful and created from abstract paintings, the breeze and the sunshine transform them into pictures again. Some works are even painted after cuts have been made. Others feature a bare, thicker canvas to provide more materiality. Much rarer now are the familiar pedestals and bell jars around her book sculptures, which made Georgia Russell's reputation – old books that she eviscerated right to the binding. Sometimes the scalpel seems to have left destructive shredding in its wake, and yet the resulting book sculptures may be so beautiful that we forgive her instantly. Conversely, the bell jar around the object is not just to protect and shield it – "Please

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

don't touch!" – but instead indicates a scientific, scrutinising distance from the object, as well as restriction and confinement. Incidentally, Georgia came across the bell jar while reading the book of the same name by American writer Sylvia Plath, which tells the story of a young woman who feels that her life is restricted, as though she is trapped under a mental bell jar.

Georgia now seems to be stripping away this existential bell jar little by little, alongside her own respect for art history. Her painting is an act of liberation, a leap into the world of sculptures, where alongside its colours it is the emptiness that gives it its depth, more air than materiality. There is always a strong, abstract space, stronger than any recognisable figure. She takes risks, uses more colour tones that are much lighter and have greater nuance. Red turns to orange, alongside brown, grey and a light green. Everything is calmer, more natural, without the cultural references of the previous work.

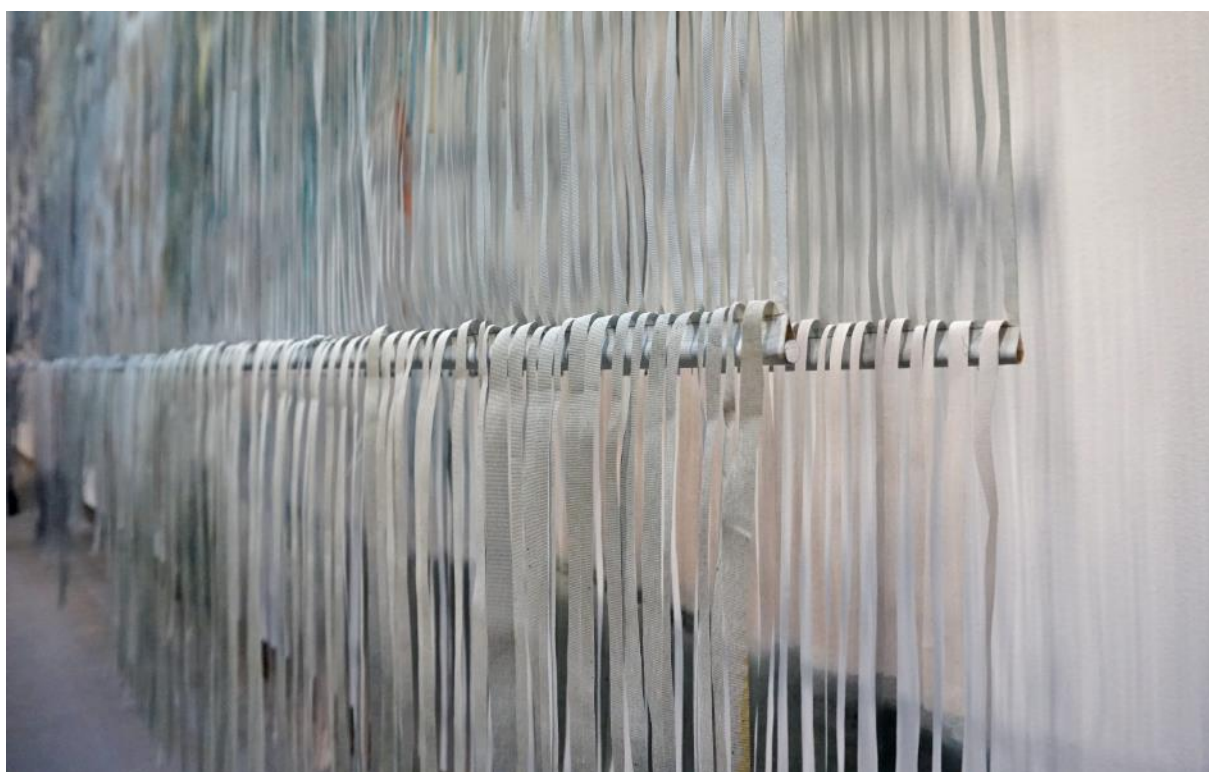


Image: Exhibition view, Georgia Russell, *Time and Tide*, Galerie Karsten Greve, 2016

In the past she said: "Above all, a book is just an object that I turn into another object". But of course it's not that simple. An old book is a symbol of our culture, a collection of knowledge compressed between hard covers and passed from hand to hand. It has a past, even if it doesn't always have a future. A glance at the names of the authors proves that the choice of titles was rarely innocent. They include Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf, with titles like *Le Deuxième Sexe*, *The Waves* (2011), *Because of you* (2009) and *L'Erotisme* (2011) – Georgia didn't leave her choice of books to chance, even if she likes to claim otherwise. Very few of her raw materials were light fiction – most had content or associations that meant something to her personally. Her own biography also played an important role. The five-part series of two-metre-high, slender sculptures started in 2013 and entitled *Forms of Belief cut from Bibles* was a clear statement from an artist who was raised a Christian. The Scottish artist, who lives in France and only started to learn French

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

during her first residency at the Paris Cité des Arts, cut her 2011 work Bilingual Sculpture from bilingual dictionaries.

Even when it is cut to pieces, a book does not lose its aura. Especially not as a result of destruction, for it is only then, as Roland Barthes once wrote, that something finds its true identity. Georgia now seems to be detaching herself from this true identity of the object. She is leaving everything material behind her, yet continuing to play with the third dimension. Maybe this is the key to her new works – playing. In spaces. In lightness. Born in 1974 to an architect in Elgin, a small village in Scotland, the artist says that life is very happy right now. So she changed her work to reflect that reality. The move to a small town, life with a young daughter, the first successful museum exhibitions. A growing confidence in her life, her everyday experiences, her art. She finds her own work "more uplifting", which is perhaps also an unconscious response to the tougher times we live in, with growing numbers of threats.

In the centre of the large workshop space hangs a canvas cut many times, folded over itself and with colours running from red to blue. What was feminine self-defence in the shooting paintings of Niki de Saint Phalle, a kind of painting by destruction, exploding the monochrome colour field, a supposedly aggressive act, is now primarily graceful, neither loaded with meaning nor aggressive. The original process of liberation is increasingly hidden. Instead, the space opens inwards, creating a tender, very feminine interaction between light and transparency.

This inward opening also affects us as individuals, as the new works have a personal impact. Less Simone de Beauvoir and more Pierre Bonnard, to put it bluntly. The new works are still autobiographical, although in a much less obvious way. They tell stories of light and landscapes, but this light is part of her life in France, at work in the studio, and the seemingly only imaginary landscapes are actually alive. She is now committed to her personal remembrance of the Scottish coasts of her childhood, even if they are universally formulated, and so internalised as remembrance spaces that they become abstract, filling an invisible emptiness.

Georgia calls her new exhibition 'Time and Tide, reminding us that time and tide wait for no man. The word "time" is not in the title as a dimension, but as an ongoing process, representing development and maturity. And a person's maturity includes the acknowledgement of quirks and character traits, of their own experiences and their past. And there again are the memories of the sea, of painting alone on the beach at night, of the lines left by the tide in the sand.

As well as the large works playing with air and emptiness, the latest collection of works also includes more compact, smaller formats behind Plexiglas. They consist of two cut canvases that are fixed one behind the other and intertwined. Their horizontal cut lines seem to imitate the movement of a wave, which is enhanced by the play of the colours. The cut canvas fragments, arching into the space, are only painted retrospectively and clearly show the brushstrokes: the trace of colour gets thinner, breaks off, and sometimes blots when the brush has been freshly dipped again.

So Georgia Russell is now painting. She may have found her artistic direction in Paris, but her work is still shaped by memories of her home not far from Aberdeen, where she says one could see all

GALERIE KARSTEN GREVE

the seasons in a single day. But she also brings other memories out in her work: her grandfather, for example, a jazz singer, in her work with scores, turning musical notes into pictures that, from a distance, looked like line drawings by abstract Expressionists. In *The Waves*, her homage to Virginia Woolf, musical scores were pasted over with false eyelashes. For the series of landscapes *Brushstroke* (2013) consisting of bright red, elaborately cut Japanese kozo paper was used, where the colourful paper strips were already superimposed, playing with the light in a magical way.

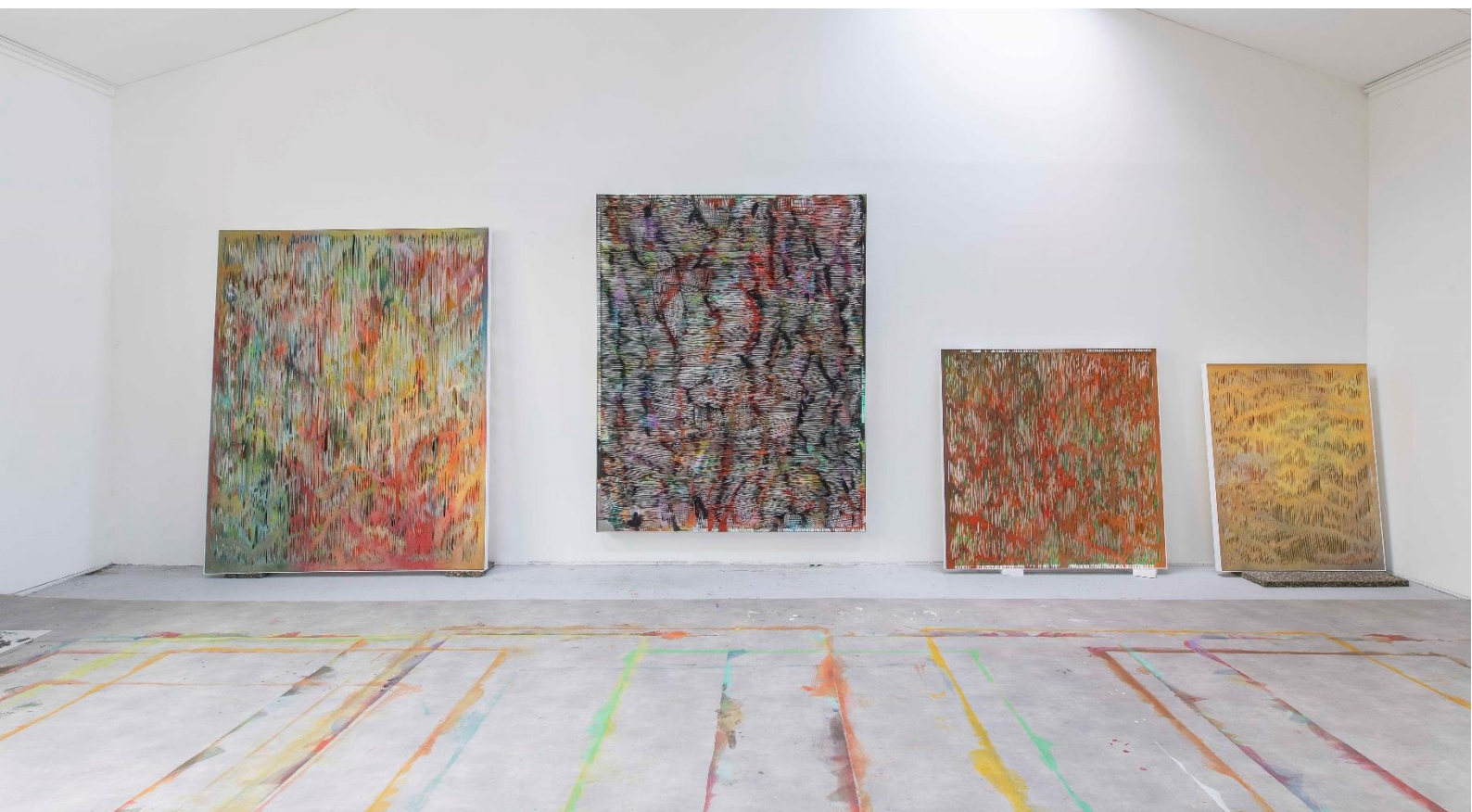
Georgia Russell is an artist with a degree, and great knowledge of and respect for art history. In contrast to the many art movements which wanted to save painting indirectly through devaluation – desacralisation, reduction, trivialisation – as attempted with very different motives by pop art and Supports/Surfaces in the 1960s and 70s, she is daring to paint again. And to enthuse about her much admired role model from long ago, back when she painted, Pierre Bonnard. She has taken another step down the path to finding a new way of painting light. Back to the future.



Georgia Russell at Galerie Karsten Greve in Cologne, 2021

Photo : Lisa Busche
Courtesy Galerie Karsten Greve Köln, Paris, St. Moritz

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