



Emily Ludwig Shaffer: An Island Refrain

Athens, July 23rd, 2021 – Dio Horia is pleased to present *An Island Refrain*, a new series of works by Brooklyn-based artist Emily Ludwig Shaffer. On view at the gallery's Mykonos location, the show will feature a new suite of paintings accompanied by acrylic works on paper and a large-scale mural and will mark the artist's first solo exhibition in Greece.

"Statues", Shaffer observes, "are the remnants of cultures that embody so much of how a society sees its people". The exhibition continues with her signature motif of archi-sculptural forms presented in surrealistic arrangements redolent with an air of de Chirico-esque spatial metaphysics updated from a perspective of a contemporary sensuality of space that is distinctly feminine. At that, *An Island Refrain's* pieces consider the rounded shapes and spare luxuriance of traditional Cycladic architecture that serves as the show's setting, and the manner in which its cubic forms epitomize volume unadulterated by ornament. "Particularly in the large painting with two figures", the artist writes, "I wanted the figures to echo the circuitous feeling of spaces, cities, and towns that grew organically over time as opposed to within a predetermined grid – such as how one might find themselves going one direction only to find themselves back to where they started". As elsewhere, the scenes in these tableaux exist in a parallel, through-the-looking-glass world – but one that also appears suspended in a half-rendered state of construction: buffed, smoothed, and toned-down in a deliberate refusal of the crutch of ornamental specificity.

Adding further to the distinctly site-specific sensibility that carries throughout the exhibition, the mural piece on view marks the first time that Shaffer has incorporated the gallery's own architecture into the paintings' internal language. With this gesture, the interlacing of the volumetric and the flat comes full circle, with the door of the gallery now living a parallel life both as a physical entrance, and as a portal into the paintings' constructed environment.

In the series of acrylic drawings that accompany the painted work, Shaffer brings back the element of a caryatid column used in a previous work by the artist. "These figures", she notes, "were originally in a painting on canvas that I made last year, but I wanted to "bring them home" so to speak, as those figures were loosely based on the caryatid columns present on the Erechtheion at the Acropolis in Athens". The caryatid, a female sculptural figure functioning as a pier, column, or pilaster within a building's framework, is believed by some to take its origin from the story of women of Caryae, who sided with the Persians in a rebellion against the Greeks and were made slaves in punishment, forever relegated to the stone-bound duty of unending labor in literally carrying the house on their heads and shoulders. This element epitomizes the way women's bodies make space but are also used historically by men to decorate it, the curvature of a female form serving paradoxically as décor and yet also an undergirding of so much utility for the enclosure of space. In Shaffer's work, that cruel utility is perverted in a way



the pliant streamlines of figures that here instead possess and guard the spaces of their habitation.

In the meantime, traditional minimalist tropes such as the grid and the cube make an appearance throughout these works as well. Simultaneously known as a foundational element of modernism, Shaffer in her turn sees the grid as a way of bringing the geometric lessons of Minimalism into a de-masculinized, domestic space that, as throughout all the works in the exhibition, redraws the parameters of known perspective and its accepted markers.

NOTES TO EDITORS

— **Emily Ludwig Shaffer** (b.1988 in San Francisco, USA) studied Painting at the Rhode Island School of Design and received her MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University. Shaffer has presented solo exhibitions internationally including Galerie Pact, Paris, 2020 and Institute 193, Lexington, KY 2019. Group exhibitions include museum, art fair and gallery shows at L’Inconnue, New York, 2021; Venus Over Manhattan, 2021; Peres Projects, Berlin, 2020; and Jeffrey Deitch, New York, NY, 2020. Her work has been featured in The Brooklyn Rail, Elephant Magazine, Numero and Art Maze magazine among many international art publications.

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