

Alanna Lawley Seepage From My Primal Fountain

A guttural howl reverberates through the room. It emanates from the deepest recesses of a dark yet distinctly corporeal figure, whose perilous bosom and protruding horns loom in a menacing gesture over a creature kneeling before it. In its sweeping brushstrokes, the scene seems to evoke a still from a nightmare suspended in the unresolved tension of lingering twilight. Perched high up on the wall next to the row of windows, *Untitled* (2019) overlooks the exhibition space like a tutelary spirit, radiating a primal force that absorbs anyone approaching.

As the exhibition title suggests, the works on display in *Seepage From My Primal Fountain* permeate the depths of female bodily experience and sensual and ethereal exploration. Through painting, drawing, sculpting, and writing, Alanna Lawley excavates the submerged histories and ancient wisdoms that have retreated into but resisted within the female body over generations subjected to patriarchal rule and libidinal capitalism. By uncovering these violent legacies, the artist channels their residual pain and pours it into creative forms of remedy and release. In a tense as much as tender way, her works unfurl the powerful correlations between sexuality, visibility, and identity.

The genesis of Lawley's present work phase, *Legacy Landscape* (2019) manifests the liberatory potential of this process of shedding. The large-scale drawing depicts sharp-edged female archetypes isolated in various states of agony and abandon and yet interconnected through shared matrilineal trauma reaching back to the beginnings of time. Their entanglement is reminiscent of a primal dance, in whose ecstatic embrace the confines of corporeal individuality and injury dissolve and a communal subjectivity emerges. This rhythmic landscape is reflected in the sculptural topography of *Globulars* (2019-present), air-dried clay objects in which the artist's hair and biodegradable latex balloons

are moulded. These cellular forms are reminiscent of visceral organs, but also of stress balls that have absorbed accumulated tensions and repressed emotions in an immediate and intuitive interaction with the material. Their bodily reverberation is amplified by their placement directly on the floor amidst a stretch of light blue yoga matting, inviting visitors to sit down and engage in a metamorphic dialogue. This panorama extends across almost the entire width of the room, as if the female figures from *Legacy Landscape* had performed their ravished dance here and left the imprint of their torment in the *Globulars*.



Non-conforming and disfigured bodies take centre stage in the exhibition, revelling in the eerie yet alluring and defying dominant and dominating perceptions of corporeality. The female body appears as a locus of knowledge and an interface through which our experience of the world opens up. Female bodily experience of the world is not simply pregnant with meaning but fraught with obstacles and perils which surface in the drawings *Let Me Tell You How You Feel* (2022-present). Loosely inspired by the tarot, the drawings show female bodies turned inside out, rendered alien and animal, their organs anthropomorphised,

in charged landscapes variously featuring phantasmagoric architecture, floral excrescences, and celestial constellations. Each drawing, while standalone, also functions as a portal to a text written by the artist in the confident, knowing tone of online horoscopes and fortune-telling websites. In this way, *Let Me Tell You How You Feel* entangles us in a feedback loop that satirically but no less succinctly criticises the outsourcing of self-knowledge and self-care to the wellness economy and techno-utopian fantasy.

Lawley's painterly surfaces become liminal spaces where enigmatic female figures dwell at the thresholds between immanence and transcendence, prehistory and futurity, inside and outside. The female body as an ever-evolving and shape-shifting entity is at the centre of the paintings from the series *Yellow Blue* (2020). Amorphous blue figures bleed into and permeate vibrant yellow colour fields, in an eternal tussle between the two hues. Even though, or perhaps precisely because, these female bodies may appear porous and permeable, they demonstrate the enduring strength and resilience rooted in the feminine. Thus, they persist and penetrate the patriarchal frame weighing down upon them.

Seepage From My Primal Fountain brings to light desiring and daring female subjects hidden beneath the gaze of patriarchal fetishisation and libidinal objectification. A feminine excess thus erupts, echoed in a guttural howl emanating from the depths of a perilous bosom and galvanised by two protruding horns. Along the genealogies of female pain, Alanna Lawley traces the currents of ancient wisdoms and embodied knowledges overflowing with restorative power and creative force.

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Let Me Tell You How You Feel / *Globulars*

Text: Lisa Deml with Laura Allsop
Photos: Nick Ash
Design: Jeanne Hofer