

VIELMETTER LOS ANGELES

Press Release

Medrie MacPhee

Qualia: I Feel You

June 1 – July 6, 2024

Opening Reception: June 1, 4 – 6 pm



Vielmetter Los Angeles is pleased to announce *Qualia: I Feel You*, New York-based painter Medrie MacPhee's first solo exhibition with the gallery, and her first in Los Angeles.

In her newest work, MacPhee creates potentially physical paintings composed of ordinary garments, deconstructed, then pulled flat and collaged into a distinct matrix of overlapping organic and rectangular shapes. After decades as a painter of architecturally-inspired Surrealistic landscape paintings, MacPhee shifted her focus to works that play with color and texture in a synthesis of formal improvisation and industrial design. She cuts up found and cast-off garments, then affixes them to large panels, carefully aligning seams, zippers, buttons, or belt-loops to create a new scaffolding. Over this puzzle-like

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infrastructure, MacPhee reorients the outlines of the garments by painting the entire canvas white. She then paints a new, overlapping—related, but not quite aligned—chromatic grid, often outlining new shapes or existing garments with slim strands of tinted piping. The implied presence of the body—through elements that articulate legs, necks, arms—creates a simultaneously humorous and poignant humanistic pull that echoes tangibly in our subconscious.

The resulting compositions read as tactile presences that might reference a contemporary take on Gee's Bend quilts in the irregular formal patchwork, Cubistic assemblages that play with edgy contours, and landscapes of gridded agricultural fields seen from above. MacPhee's working philosophy and practice resonate with artists such as Anni Albers and her focus on innovative textile designs, Harmony Hammond's materiality and ethos bound to her monochromatic abstractions, and the female Russian Constructivists' (Lyubov Popova, Varvara Stepanova, and Natalia Goncharova) revolutionary structural approaches to painting.

MacPhee considers each work an arena of play where the real coexists and complements an imagined verbal/visual language. As the artist says, "the pauses and gaps, the symbiotic relationship between the present and absent, the subterranean level of feeling and instinct that lies under words, and the force of their undertow" are reflected in the new paintings in the exhibition. She describes below the meaning of the evocative title, *Qualia: I Feel You*.

Qualia is the term philosophers coined to describe an entirely subjective experience associated with the state of consciousness. It is the shadow presence that takes us beyond rational, scientific explanation and, in doing so, is the co-pilot who interprets all sensate experience with simultaneity. Color, shape, musicality, texture, tonality, line, dimensionality come into play immediately and the associations that arise are processed over time.

There is something comedic about a neurologist holding a brain and showing with a pointer where in this gelatinous mass our emotions and sensations are located. In a surrounding culture that is a constant barrage of information processing, we are a species that is using outdated hardware (our bodies) to comprehend the virtual world we have created.

These paintings draw their inspiration through a Beckettian operation of sourcing secondhand clothing and items from the bins of 99 cent stores and charity shops, elevating them into a grander realm. Each painting possesses something of the shapes of the people who wore them but enriched with new possibility. Although not three-dimensional, all the accumulations of seams, textures, colors, notions present both figure and ground "pressed into service."

As Susan Sontag remarked “Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there. Our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all.”

Medrie MacPhee was born in Edmonton, Alberta, and has resided in New York City since 1976. She received a B.F.A. from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax in 1977.

Her work has been exhibited in over thirty solo and seventy group exhibitions, in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. MacPhee is represented in various private and public collections, including: the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum, Hartford, CT; the National Academy of Design, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Musée d’art Contemporain de Montréal; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; the Edmonton Art Gallery, Alberta; the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, B.C.; and the Asheville Art Museum, NC.

MacPhee is a recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, a Pollock-Krasner Award, an Anonymous Was a Woman grant, a National Endowment for the Arts Grant, New York Foundation for the Arts Grants, American Academy of Arts and Letters Purchase Prize Awards, the Elizabeth Greenshields Award, and Canada Council Established-Artist Grants. She has been a resident at the Bogliasco Foundation in Italy, the Bau Institute of the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, the MacDowell Colony, the Vermont Studio Center, the American Academy in Rome, and Flying Horse Editions, Orlando, Florida, which produced a limited edition of her prints. She received a public art commission from Cadillac Fairview to execute a major painting for the Main Tower of the Mies van der Rohe Toronto Dominion Center in Toronto for 2015.

MacPhee is Emeritus Professor of Studio Arts, Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. She is represented by Tibor de Nagy Gallery in NYC and Nicholas Metivier Gallery in Toronto.

The gallery is located at 1700 S Santa Fe Avenue, south of the 10 freeway. Parking is available on the south parking lot adjacent to the building. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm and by appointment. For further information and press inquiries, please contact Olivia Gauthier at Olivia@vielmetter.com.