

HESSE FLATOW

Maureen St. Vincent: *Ripple Hiss*

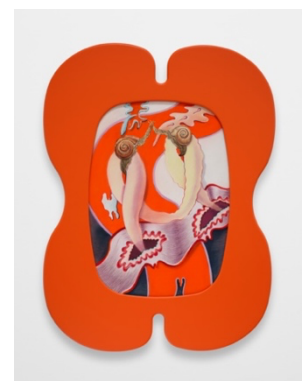
November 10 – December 17, 2022

Opening reception: November 10, 6-8pm

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HESSE FLATOW is pleased to announce the opening of *Ripple Hiss*, an exhibition by the Bay Area artist Maureen St. Vincent, marking her first solo presentation with the gallery.

Embedded within Maureen St. Vincent's painted and shaped frames, apertures open onto worlds of imagery at once surreal and familiar. The ovular as a guiding, compositional form here isn't incidental: executed in arcadian, textured pastels; soft fleshy pinks; and saturated swaths of vibrant hues, her drawings invoke the bodily while sliding over into interior visions, intense viscerality, sensuous symbolism, and unruly fantasies.



St. Vincent calls these works “naughty.” The artist traffics in promiscuous slippages—between image and frame, interior and exterior, figure and ground, corporeal or organic materiality and phantasmatic realms. In this relay between registers, figure and form are co-extensive, exerting influence upon one another. Take *Biancabella and the Snake*, for instance, where the configuration of a frame defined by the bilateral symmetry of its bulbous, airfoil halves invites repetition within the image field: a Rorschach-like doubling that never yields an exact mirror image. Separated from the solid blue frame by a thin, jagged, electric pink line, the enclosed image is twofold and further reduces into twos from there. First, there are two egg-like zones, connected at the midline by a vaginal slit; then, there is the dichotomous separation of pictorial space—one part fleshy-pink tissue, the other, an extension of the frame's Turkish blue, that bleeds into the drawing. Within each scene, set on a bed of textured grass, two thick-bodied, limbless and unarticulated ringed masses rise up against a yellow ground.

In their proliferating, discrepant twinnings, these images harken back to the Jungian concept of the Shadow Self—an archetypal model of the subject's unconscious laden with all that is repressed, cast aside, or unassimilable and always threatening to claw at the conscious, elusory grip on ego cohesion. Yet in St. Vincent's work—this double is more than mere psychic menace: the Ego and Shadow Self take pleasure in their comingling, in reversals and substitutions, in their cross-contamination. St. Vincent, born with a twin, and pregnant at the time of making these works, invokes the double with kinship, with complicity.

St. Vincent culls from this symbolic repertoire repeatedly. In *Cleopatra's Ovaries*, entwined snakes jeer their hissing/kissing tongues at each other as their tails trail off into sinuous braids from which clusters of grapes hang in suspension. Symbols of fertility and abundance, grapes also invoke Bacchic revelry. In *Mom's Jewels*, chained grapes and a sinuous serpent similarly emerge from a radiating, gaping orifice, against a dense purple and crimson reticular ground. Embodying Biblical allegories of chaos, evil, and the fall through temptation, the serpent also conjures fluidity, rebirth, healing, and self-regeneration. Held in tension, too, is the push and pull between the serpent as phallus, and the generative representation of orifices in St. Vincent's work. In *Sister Slip*, for instance, such breaches in the picture plane, construed as vaginal slits or mouths, spew elegant, leg-like perches upon which stand a pair of snails, caught in viscous embrace. Viscid and tensile forms—rendered animate in these compositions where all elements are endowed with dynamic vitality—become yet another image repertoire to draw from in St. Vincent's formal and symbolic dictionary.

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As cast-aside surrealisms reemerge from the historical shadows, and visions of the occult, the transcendental, and the fantastic come into focus, Maureen St. Vincent's work offers vistas into an internal experience of female corporeality and symbolic sexual imaginary dense with rapturous life-forms and psychic tension that center visual pleasure as a boundless experience. – Rachel Valinsky.

Maureen St. Vincent (b. San Luis Obispo, CA) currently lives and works in Oakland, CA. She received her BA from San Francisco State University and graduated from Hunter College's MFA program with an emphasis in painting. St. Vincent's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Moskowitz Bayse, Los Angeles and Zoe Fisher Projects, New York City. She has also been included in group exhibitions at Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Adams and Ollman, Portland, OR; Regina Rex, New York, NY; and San Luis Obispo Museum of Art. Her work has been featured in multiple publications including *ArtMaze Magazine*, *Artnet News*, *Brooklyn Rail*, and *Art of Choice*.

Rachel Valinsky is a writer, editor, and curator based in New York.

Image: Maureen St. Vincent, *Sister Slip*, 2022, soft pastel on paper with artist frame, 45 x 34 x 3/4 in (114.3 x 86.4 x 1.9 cm)