

HESSE FLATOW

Sonia Louise Davis: *resonant frequencies, blossoming tones*
September 1 – October 1, 2022

Opening reception: September 1, 6-8pm

General inquiries: info@hesseflatow.com

HESSE FLATOW is pleased to announce the opening of *resonant frequencies, blossoming tones* by Sonia Louise Davis. Marking her first solo presentation with the gallery, the exhibition premieres a new body of large-scale, immersive work from her *emergence* series that the artist calls “soft paintings.”



Throughout her multi-disciplinary practice, Davis includes elements of painting, voice, and craft. For these paintings, Davis explores how a radical sonic framework for improvisation can inform an embodied practice for object-making. Using industrial tufting machines as drawing instruments, Davis creates abstract, richly-hued compositions with yarns that are threaded together for their ability to make new tones and textures. Filled with blossoming shag piles and soft curling loops, Davis's paintings put forth a voluminous cacophony of geometric and organic shapes, coupled with gestural strokes. Invoking the vocabularies of sight, sound, and movement, Davis pushes the formal potential of yarn and the materiality of painting alike.

Each painting progresses through an instinctual process of listening and response—a practice stemming from the artist's vocal and gestural training in improvisation. The speed of the tufting machine informs spontaneous changes in movement, color, material, and technique. Davis treats the surface as the visual site of experimentation, where forms unfold simultaneously across the frame, manifesting the condition of emergence. The resulting compositions are complex intuitive arrangements of intensity, tonality, and melody—what Davis describes as focus that emerges within the din. Because Davis stands and works on each piece from behind, they are filled with moments of discovery. The resulting forms and what the viewer sees are the textural reliefs of her moves—a non-linear record of their making.

Through sensations of texture, sound, and sight, the softness of Davis's paintings when in chorus with craft and song suggest an expanded potential of form and their abilities to hold memories and emotions. Works such as *sundance*, in homage to Jeanne Lee, and *sweet earth flying*—named after Marion Brown's album of the same name—gesture towards avant-garde traditions of Black musicians who pushed limits of their forms as liberatory praxis. The emotional and energetic compositions in the *emergence* series insist on abstraction's ability to resist overdetermination, the political and formal entanglement of Black musical improvisation, and the relational arrangement of the ensemble.

-Kristin Juarez

On the occasion of her exhibition, a companion booklet will be published, situating Davis's work within the broader context of her practice. Featuring a collaborative essay between the artist and the scholar and curator Kristin Juarez, as well as a playlist, the booklet follows the artist's commitment to producing poetry and ephemera alongside her visual and performance art.

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Born and raised in New York City, **Sonia Louise Davis** is a visual artist, writer and performer. She has presented her work at the Whitney Museum (NY), ACRE (Chicago), Sadie Halie Projects (Minneapolis), Ortega y Gasset (Brooklyn), Rubber Factory (NY), and Artists Space (NY), among other venues. Residencies and fellowships include the Laundromat Project's Create Change Fellowship (NY), Civitella Ranieri (Italy), New York Community Trust Van Lier Fellowship at the International Studio & Curatorial Program (Brooklyn), Culture Push Fellowship for Utopian Practice (NY), Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace Artist in Residence Program (NY), Studio Immersion Project Fellowship at the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop (NY) and STONELEAF RETREAT (NY). Her newest book, "slow and soft and righteous, improvising at the end of the world (and how we make a new one)" was published in 2021 by Co—Conspirator Press, which operates out of the Feminist Center for Creative Work in Los Angeles. An honors graduate of Wesleyan University (BA, African American Studies) and alumna of the Whitney Independent Study Program, Davis lives and works in Harlem.

Kristin Juarez, PhD is a scholar and curator who conducts archival research on the lineages of multidisciplinary experimentation. She is based in Los Angeles, CA.

Image: **Sonia Louise Davis**, *emergence: sweet earth flying*, 2022, Norwegian raw wool, hand-spun dyed wool, cotton and acrylic yarns, 46 x 50 x 2 in (116.8 x 127 x 5.1 cm)