



CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts Presents

Léonie Guyer: form in the realm of

The first institutional solo exhibition of San Francisco-based artist Léonie Guyer.

October 18–December 15, 2018



Léonie Guyer, *Gift*, 2006 (installation detail). Collection of the Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon, New Lebanon, New York.

San Francisco, CA—September 13, 2018—San Francisco-based artist Léonie Guyer (b. 1955, New York City) creates paintings, drawings, and books that are intimate in scale and minimalist in sensibility, yet are also expansive, idiosyncratic, and deeply nuanced. Consisting mostly of abstract shapes, some of her works are painted on wooden panels or marble fragments, others are drawn on paper, and others are painted directly onto walls in site-responsive installations. This exhibition, titled *form in the realm of*, is the first monographic institutional showing of her work that will also feature newly commissioned work. It opens at CCA Wattis Institute on October 18 and remains on view until December 15, 2018. It is curated by CCA Wattis Director and Chief Curator Anthony Huberman as part of the institute's 20th anniversary programming.

As an artist, Guyer rejects language. She is drawn to the moment that precedes it, and her paintings locate a space that we can't yet recognize,

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name, or describe. She is seeking an experience that is at the edge of visibility: pre-language, pre-shape, pre-geometry.

Scale plays an important role in Guyer's work. In her mind, an artwork is a place where countless decisions are condensed and compacted together, and she works to intensify that concentration by keeping her paintings small and reduced down to their bare essentials: color, surface, and shape. She tries to do the most with the least.

"A simple dot or a line," Guyer says, "would not be idiosyncratic enough." The shapes she draws are nuanced and precise but also amorphous and even a bit awkward. They could be formal abstract compositions, but also a hieroglyphic form of language, an ancient or secret symbol, or a mark on a graphic score, and they combine the character and texture of each. In that sense, they are the opposite of ornament: They aim to make painting feel stranger, not more comfortable. We could call these shapes beautiful, but only because they are imperfect.

To make her work, Guyer is inspired by so much of what has come before her. Especially close to her heart are the simple and essential forms made by the Shakers, whose furniture and tools she relates to the abstractions of Constantin Brancusi or James Lee Byars, and whose elaborate "gift drawings" she considers a visual form of speaking in tongues. She visits museum collections to see Cycladic or Aegean figurines and ancient Japanese and Korean vessels, dating as far back as the 16th or 15th centuries B.C. She owns a small collection of Indian tantric paintings and Roman unguentaria.

As a way to point to the many artistic vocabularies that overlap and co-exist within Guyer's work, this exhibition features a vitrine of objects and references. With her paintings and drawings serving as the common point of departure, each of these elements contributes a different trajectory outward and connects Guyer's abstract paintings to Shaker design, Greek archeology, mysticism, poetry, and music.

In addition to her studio work, Guyer is a dedicated college educator who previously taught at CCA. The Wattis Institute is proud to welcome Guyer back to campus for her first institutional solo exhibition and to continue its commitment to supporting the careers of local and regional artists.

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About the Artist

Léonie Guyer's work has been exhibited in galleries such as Feature Inc. and Peter Blum Gallery in New York; Greg Kucera Gallery in Seattle; 2nd Floor Projects and Triple Base Gallery in San Francisco; among others. Institutions or nonprofit spaces such as the Berkeley Art Museum; Pacific Film Archive the Lumber Room and the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, both in Portland; and the Shaker Museum in Mount Lebanon, New York, have also exhibited her work. Guyer has collaborated on book projects with poets Franck André Jamme and the late Bill Berkson. She has taught at the California College of the Arts, the San Francisco Art Institute, and the University of California at Berkeley, and she is currently an adjunct professor at San Jose State University. Guyer received her BFA and MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute. She lives and works in San Francisco.

About CCA Wattis Institute of Contemporary Arts

Founded in 1998 at California College of the Arts in San Francisco and located a few blocks from its campus, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts is a nonprofit exhibition venue and research institute dedicated to contemporary art and ideas. As an exhibition space, it commissions and shows new work by emerging and established artists from around the world. Recent solo exhibitions include *Ken Lum: What's Old is Old for a Dog*; *Henrik Olesen: The Walk*; *Melanie Gilligan: Parts-wholes*; *Howard Fried: Derelicts*; *Laura Owens: Ten Paintings*; *Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys: Tram 3* (which traveled to MoMA PS1); *Josephine Pryde: Lapses in Thinking by the Person I Am* (which traveled to ICA Philadelphia and earned Pryde a 2016 Turner Prize nomination); *K.r.m. Mooney: En, set*; *Sam Lewitt: More Heat Than Light* (which traveled to Kunsthalle Basel and the Swiss Institute, New York); and *Ellen Cantor: Cinderella Syndrome* (which traveled to Künstlerhaus Stuttgart). A recent group exhibition, *Mechanisms*, travels to Secession in Vienna in an expanded form entitled *Other Mechanisms*.

As a research institute, the Wattis dedicates an entire year to reflect on the work of a single artist, which informs a regular series of public programs and publications involving the field's most prominent artists and thinkers. The 2018–2019 season is dedicated to the writer Dodie Bellamy; past seasons featured Joan Jonas, Andrea Fraser, David Hammons, and Seth Price.

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The Wattis also hosts an annual Capp Street Artist-in-Residence, one of the earliest and longest-running artist-in-residence programs in the country, founded in 1983 by Ann Hatch, as Capp Street Project, and incorporated into the Wattis Institute in 1998. Each year, an artist comes to live and work in San Francisco for a semester, teaches a graduate seminar at CCA, and presents an exhibition. Recent participants include *contemporary* (2017–2018), Melanie Gilligan (2016–2017), Carissa Rodriguez (2015–2016), Nairy Baghramian (2014–2015), Claire Fontaine (2013–2014), Ryan Gander (2012–2013), Harrell Fletcher and Kris Martin (2011–2012), Paulina Olowska and Renata Lucas (2010–2011), and Abraham Cruzvillegas (2009–2010).

For more information, visit: wattis.org

About California College of the Arts

Founded in 1907, California College of the Arts (CCA) educates students to shape culture and society through the practice and critical study of art, architecture, design, and writing. Benefitting from its San Francisco Bay Area location, the college prepares students for lifelong creative work by cultivating innovation, community engagement, and social and environmental responsibility.

CCA offers a rich curriculum of 22 undergraduate and 11 graduate programs in art, design, architecture, and writing taught by a faculty of expert practitioners, and attracts promising students from across the United States and from 55 countries around the world. Graduates are highly sought-after by companies such as Pixar/Disney, Apple, Intel, Facebook, Gensler, Google, IDEO, Autodesk, Mattel, and Nike, and many have launched their own successful businesses.

CCA is creating a new, expanded college campus at its current site in San Francisco that will open during the 2021–2022 academic year. Spearheaded by Studio Gang architects, the new campus design will be a model of [sustainable construction and practice](#); will unite the college's programs in art, crafts, design, architecture, and writing in one location to create new adjacencies and interactions; and will provide [more student housing](#) than ever before.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

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Opening reception: Thursday, October 18, 2018, 6:30–8:30pm

Location: 360 Kansas Street (between 16th and 17th Streets), San Francisco

Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 12–6pm; closed Sunday and Monday

Admission: Free

Information: 415.355.9670 or visit wattis.org

Social: Instagram // Twitter // Facebook @WattisArts

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