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Sophie Crichton, Little Bones, 11 August – 03 September 2022

“Quality of energy varies throughout the day. don’t disapprove of the high know how to use it.” - Louise Bourgeois

Through a sophisticated use of refined mark making, Sophie Crichton (b.1993, Toronto) creates expansive abstracted canvases that incorporate the residue of everyday life into elegant and shifting scenes. The artist, now living in Barcelona, takes inspiration from seemingly banal encounters – the everyday unrest of her urban environment, tangled wires, graffiti, or a faded hint of a neon sign – the artist produces images imbued with power and harmony. Crichton is interested in what happens in the margins of everyday life. Wandering through cities, often in the hopes of getting lost, she searches for moments and memories, experiences and stories which she later relays into her abstract canvases, forming the bedrock to her paintings.

Each work acts as a balance of fervours gestures combined with meditative moments of reduction and calmness. Bursts of playful power, turmoil and disorder are created with erratic, anarchic marks. These scratching moments are paired with meditative movements and washes in an artful dance. This duality of control and chaos are a nod to the contradictions and confusion of contemporary living. In a society which demands constant paradoxical ambitions, and an insatiable drive to push ever forward, Crichton’s works are a commentary on the ever-shifting targets and incongruity of modern life.

The artist has developed a gestural vocabulary in which each line and colour is infused with energy and meaning. She freely-scribbles, scratches and stains her canvases. The larger-scale paintings in Little Bones portray a visceral physicality. The artist is forced to move and manoeuvre in order cover the immense grounds which are awash with greys, tans, and off-whites. These neutral fields are interjected with bold colours, dabs and swatches which allow abstract notations to erupt from the canvas organically.

Each painting is accompanied by a title that offers a glimpse or departing point into the work. Extracted from words and notations written in her notebook, Crichton writes lyrical, abstract snippets of memories and intuitions which are used to formulate titles such as Fever Dream, Sideways Glance and Goosebumps Down A Spine, The Bones Protruding Slightly.

In the expansive, layered canvas Nervous System, 2022 of acrylic, oil stick, pencil and spray paint - bold, neon pinks and reds creep into the neutral ground from the edges. Blue scribbles, lines and dabs of paint are interjected into the scene in order to give balance and equity. Unknowable references and insinuations of colour, form and texture extracted from her urban environment litter the scene. The viewer is invited to impose themselves onto and into the works.

Installed alongside the paintings in Little Bones, a kinetic installation of draped sheer fabric, overlay and obscure a video projection – a first for the artist. Seen by Crichton as a vehicle inside her paintings, we are offered glimpses into her processes of making. In the video, accompanied by a soundtrack of pencil scratches, music and noise, photographs of her adopted Spanish city are interspersed with intimate and solitary scenes of the artist in her studio.

The works of Little Bones are imbued with tenderness, tension and power. Through a quiet, contemplative confidence, the paintings feel fresh, current and alive.

56 EASTCASTLE ST. LONDON W1W 8EG
+44 020 8146 7574 — INFO@OMNIGALLERY.COM
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