



Press Release

Afternoon Projects is delighted to present *Le cirque des mémoires*, a solo exhibition by Montreal-based artist Caro Deschênes. Caro Deschênes work meditates on identity's duality; the inner life and outer world. What resonates in their paintings is the tension between the two and what it is to reflect inwardly and perform outwardly. This exploration of becoming creates work that is a site of wonder and question, but perhaps not of answers.

There is a shadowy quality to the canvases, and a playful trickery in the superimposed layers. Like looking in a window at night the paintings show what is immediate, what is close behind, and what is beyond, and the bounds of each layer catch and meld. To look at the paintings is to uncover them, to wander into a canvas and make sense of shapes and light at their tipping points; one colour pours into the next and as quickly as images reveal themselves they return to a shrouded obscurity.

Deschênes' fluid approach to paint is reflected in their approach to figuration where bodies with mystified boundaries reveal themselves slowly, and floating limbs appear to dance alongside disorganized half-bodies. The paintings ponder a tinted version of beauty, one that appears in a kind of distorted mirror or fragmented memory. The canvases have plenty of small mysteries like this, ones that play at wholeness and partiality and the mixed up logic of dreaming. Their work evokes the shadowy feelings of dusk, and the fuzzy excitement of a low lit theatre at curtain call.

Performance is echoed in Deschênes ornamental and unearthly depictions of nature, where flowers appear to grow in darkness and catch fire near their tops, or the paint itself looks to be twisted in the whistling of a windy day. And there is a mineral and metallic wash in Deschênes paintings; swathes of the canvas appear darkened with patina or oxidized colour, and among the shades that gesture towards decomposition there are gilded highlights so warm they appear like light shone through the back of the canvas, like a sunbeam through a hole in a heavy curtain. Paint slides and folds along itself, covering and uncovering what is sharp and soft, what is light and dark. The paintings express pain and pleasure, the seasons of change, and a tranquil subterranean rootedness alongside the ecstatic freedom of flight.

- Ella Ramsay



Artist Bio

Caro Deschênes is a visual artist working and living in Montréal. They hold a BFA (with distinction) in Painting in Drawing from Concordia University (2017) and were nominated for the BMO 1st Art! Award (2017). In recent years, Caro Deschênes has been featured in various Exhibitions in Canada and Internationally, including a solo exhibition on the site of an upcoming artist cooperative in Chabanel district (Montréal), a solo exhibition at Afternoon Projects and NADA Miami 2022.

In their paintings, Caro Deschênes explores themes of solitude, self-discovery, and acceptance. Their work plays with inner associations of emotions to colors, lights, shapes, and compositions to create ethereal scenes addressing narratives about our vulnerable selves. Through processes of creation and destruction within each work, their paintings strive to be as uncertain and fragile as our lives.