



EVERGLOW

LAUREL HOLLOMAN

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Curated by Jan Verschoor

Museum Jan van der Togt
Amstelveen, Netherlands

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Everglow, Laurel Holloman's solo show in Amsterdam, continues in the thematic area of science and nature, much like *The Fifth Element* (Paris 2014), yet it goes deeper.

"The inspiration began in Carmel, California with a photography session (in the rain) at Point Lobos State Nature Reserve, and a whale watching trip to the Channel Islands. I spent most of the week in a wet tent and not on the internet and it was a hugely profound experience for me. Following this, I ended up on a two day snowshoeing trip in the Aspen mountains shooting elements of the forest"

Laurel Holloman decided to combine the large scale murals of *The Fifth Element* to create a visual journey that interplays the abstracts work with newer slightly figurative landscapes of animals and plants. The main emphasis is still science and nature but also the show reflects our connectivity to the earth and our environment.

Everglow is actually two shows in one.

While the abstracts hint at elemental imagery, earth, wind, fire, and water, the newer Everglow paintings capture actual images of nature, woods, plants, animals in their natural environment. The journey is similar to using a pair of binoculars that is slowly coming into focus. The earlier rooms start with blurred out abstracts only hinting at themes until the final room of more photo based foliage.

The Everglow series of back paneled LEDs is representative of our current global warming issues. Each piece is a combination of ice and fire, representing the inevitable melting we have witnessed in our farthest reaching climates.

"We cannot deny at this moment we are dependent on nature for our survival. Put simply, science doesn't lie"

Laurel Holloman

Recent Critical Essays

Laurel Holloman is an artist whose talent displays a depth of understanding in the use of color techniques. Her works show a sound combination of study and academic training combining a poetic dimension and an aptitude for communicative transmission. Laurel clearly draws her inspiration in the best tradition of abstract art, going from Marlene Dumas to Georgia O'Keefe and certainly to Paul Jenkins.

The principal characteristic of her artistic work is definitely her use of color and light, obtained by brush strokes showing a progression in execution that ranges easily over a wide variety of nuances and sensations. Thus, in the works of Laurel Holloman, color is the key to capturing the attention of the viewer. In her paintings, color traits are the depositaries of ideas and emotions that rise up like phantoms and her brush strokes contribute to provide them with form and perception, revealing the essence and sophistication of this artist. The creations in this exhibition seem to have found their inspiration during the course of the execution itself, as if a creative wind helped to move Laurel's brush in an anarchic movement that follows a direction, in fact "her direction", apparently variable, that take us on a journey from one painting to another.

This progression is clear in the research the artist has undertaken for the series «The Fifth Element», in which the color synthesis and light bring out the language of the works in which abstraction dissolves. The viewer's regard perceives something, a living forest, leaves in the wind turning towards the sun, everything is abstract, undefined, for in movement, gradually taking shape and in our consciousness, we can feel the air that surrounds us. The painting becomes the essence of the air itself with all its creative potential and we can almost hear the sound of emotions in movement. Emotions are the real subject of the works of Laurel Holloman, as the titles of the paintings themselves reveal; the emotions that the artist entrusts, in the representation, with a permanent dialogue between color and the brush stroke texture, with a movement that is sometimes subtle and at others lively and ornate.

This game of color takes us to the threshold of perceiving forms and figures that seem far away even though present and then gradually emerge becoming defined almost as if backlit, the natural territory of emotions. Everything is created without artifice; in the paintings of Laurel Holloman there is no dissonance, yet everything is hazy and everything is in movement, as if there are always two different souls in constant dialogue. The inspiration and references to the School of Abstract Art have been mentioned, enriched by an artistic value brought by Laurel Holloman. But the artist, in this exhibition "The Fifth Element", goes well beyond tradition with a personal interpretation, defining a unique and fascinating style.

Marco O. Avvisati de Martino

The sublime is now is the title of an article written by Barnett Newman in 1948. I was reminded of it while looking at the paintings Laurel Holloman prepared for this Venice solo show. There are two main reasons for it. First of all, Holloman's paintings follow in the great tradition of American abstract Expressionism: thence she draws her powerful and expressive brush, the large size of her works as well as their strong emotional impact. Sublime is the idea conveyed by the creation of art revealing a powerful spiritual component, using nature and the surrounding cosmos to reveal its mysteries, making the invisible energy holding them together palpable. If I were to trace back Holloman's paintings to western art, I would start with Turner tempests and Caspar David Friederich's meditations on landscape to get to Edvard Munch's moonlit nights, Wassily Kandinsky's symbolic colour down to Rothko's bright surfaces and Barnett Newman himself. Her paintings are a step along this long and romantic journey through shapes, colours and brightness, all originating from a visible world and all seemingly wishing to reveal its hidden skeleton but perceiving at the same time the need to transcend and reach the spirit, reveal the secret fissures in a hardly discernible universe. Each has its own cosmogony. But Holloman's works do not confine themselves to capturing a given moment or object in time. They pull everything together into a broader system of inextricably connected elements. Here the work of art becomes the link between man and the intangible, the imponderable.

In the words of the Dervish Shams, the extraordinary character of Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*, it opens the door to the divine. Holloman's brilliant, fluid colors become the symbolic expression of ungraspable mysteries. Rothko always maintained that his outsize works were not a bid for pomp and circumstance but rather intimacy. Holloman has also chosen the monumental dimension. Like her American predecessor, her works draw the viewer in, taking him literally into the painting. They capture the gaze. Through the small window of the eye, you become part of a magnetic force that erupts from the painting and spills over into its immediate surrounds. (Which is why Holloman's works need lots of empty space around them.) The colors seem to spread beyond the canvas and over the frame into the world of the viewer.

Looking at the deep blue of *Let Me Fall*, we slip, or rather fall, into the painting, becoming that searing ray of light in *Luminosa*, are caught up in the whirling forms as they take substantive shape of *Gravity Always Wins*, or enveloped by the converging waters of *Between Two Seas* – a title that, I believe, is not a chance reference to the book, *The Junction of Two Oceans* about the similarities of Hindu and Sufi spiritual traditions, written in the 17th century by Muhammad Da-ra-Siko-h – and which cost him his life. One cannot help think that if only the world had heeded that poet prince it would be a very different place and the scourge of wars of religion would be unknown.

Holloman is driven, as I see it, by the desire to unify, harmonize, and bring together rather than divide the various elements of the universe on the premise that as parts of the universe, they are inevitably similar. While not shying from the ill ease and melancholy that pervade our world, Holloman seeks an uplifting accord, and the beauty that springs quite simply from arousing emotions. She digs deep into the human condition in the incandescent morning of yellows and reds of *Grace*, *I walk alone*, *And I love You*, into the darkness of a troubled night in *Memory Loss*, the fury of primordial forces in *Free Falling*, and the lacerations and suffering of *Wounded*. Yet there is also another world, a sort of Garden of Eden where harmony triumphs as in *Parent/Child*. What emerges from this tangle is that the here and now, the Sublime of which Barnett Newman talks in his article, is also something that transcends time and space.

Holloman seems imbued with Leopardi's sense of the infinite that stems from a very real sense of man's finite boundaries, like the poet's confining hedge. Matter dissolves into a mystical, wordless luminosity; shimmering images that hail from afar sweep away the encroaching gloom. In a word, Holloman's paintings take us elsewhere. And this, at the end of the day, is what art is all about. To become one with the throbbing pulse of this boundless world that is ours.

Lea Mattarella – la Repubblica Art Critic

Perhaps the easiest way to approach Laurel Holloman's paintings is to take a step back. The enormous scale of their canvasses that measure up to fourteen by seven feet need a certain distance in order for the viewer to immerse himself in them. Once this happens, the intense, cloudy, abstractly pulsing streams of color condense to what they really are: inner landscapes.

Laurel Holloman stakes a claim with her images that is diametrically opposed to the stringently formal concepts or politically ambitious positions of a major part of contemporary art. Her art deals with nothing less than the origin of life, with the world as a whole and the role of human beings in it, with the chaos of the cosmos into which we are thrown. Laurel Holloman picks up from the almost spiritual approach of the post-war modern movement before conceptual art cut a swath for intellect and rationality. Her paintings are soul mates of the color field paintings of painters such as Barnett Newman or Mark Rothko who sucked the viewer into their paintings in keeping with Immanuel Kant's concept of the "sublime" as a natural higher power. But in contrast to her predecessors, Holloman's images develop a pull that is full of movement and coincidences.

Her more recent works seem to take their cues from surrealism: Led by the gesture of the unconscious that Max Ernst or Salvador Dalí used in their phantastically conceived images, the color-drenched, open-bordered plains give rise to smaller-scale structures that often seem to be serially arranged as a sort of automatic writing or psychogramme. André Breton, who used a similar method for writing, called this approach to artistic creation in his 1924 Surrealist Manifesto a "mental dictation not subordinate to any rational control". In her undefinable, softly undulating pictorial spaces, Laurel Holloman consciously eliminates any hint of a horizon in order to be able to move freely as if in the starry sky or a body of water that could derive from a sequence in a dream or a childhood memory. Flickering light effects that recall the reflection of the sun on water or storm clouds in the summer sky heighten this impression. But each hinted-at figuration immediately gives way to a higher-level, almost mystical atmosphere – a main source for the intensity of these works.

Subconscious, dream-like, spontaneous impulses appear as Laurel Holloman's essential driving forces. Her pictorial spaces describe shadows and waves, lightning and clouds without concrete depiction of natural phenomena. At the same time, they leave an impression that is clearly derived from Nature. They can be connected to the trance states of the surrealists as well as conjuring up the poetic impulse of German romanticism. The unfiltered access to psychological states is transformed into an orientation on primeval natural events. Laurel Holloman's paintings come into being at the nexus between landscape motifs and emotional qualities.

However, the compositional concept of form that is still present in classic romanticism recedes in favor of rhythmic expressivity that does not avail itself of univocal symbols. The guideline is a free concept of the pictorial as it was celebrated towards the close of the modern movement.

What Laurel Holloman adds to this approach is a playful, mysterious component. In this, she is closer to the turn-of-the-century symbolism of Odilon Redon or the meditative enchanted worlds of Paul Klee than to the grand gestures of the fully abstract post-war painters. The artist's disinclination towards the darker impulses that are a recurring – or even a principal - theme in surrealism and romanticism elements makes her work not only existentially bearable but actively alluring, not an easy feat given their huge dimensions that would seem to demand stringent control rather than a playfully light touch.

This particularity is especially noteworthy in so far as historically the mastery of monumental formats is mostly the reserve of male painters. From Rembrandt van Rijn's "Nightwatch" (1642) to Théodore Géricault's "Raft of the Medusa" (1818/19), from Pablo Picasso's unsettling panorama of war "Guernica" (1937) to Barnett Newman's abstraction "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue IV" (1969/70) and Anselm Kiefer's apocalyptically crannied landscape "Bohemia by the Sea" (1995), it was mostly artists using grand gestures and an (art-)historically highly reflective approach that expended their energies on landscape formats. Laurel Holloman's decision for wall-filling canvasses by contrast makes no historicising claims. Clearly, it is motivated purely by the self-confident desire to provide the largest space possible to the force of her emotional expression and, almost as an aside, to present the viewer with mankind's subordinate place in the world, without ever falling into the trap of merely filling the picture plain at random.

In her combination of pictorial principles inspired by romanticism, surrealism and color field painting that are regarded as classic and completely original expression of emotions, Laurel Holloman has created an oeuvre that distances itself from all attempts at facile art historical categorisation. Her paintings are timeless, neither backward-looking nor asserting a renewal of any specific theoretical concept of what painting ought to achieve. Laurel Holloman's paintings, just like their feely associated titles, speak of a forthright avowal of emotion and memory without pushing a pre-defined message on their viewers. Rather, these works allow the viewer to float in their pictorial spaces – or in their own inner landscapes.

Gesine Borchardt



Into the Woods

Oil on canvas

80 x 140 in.



Lavender Forest

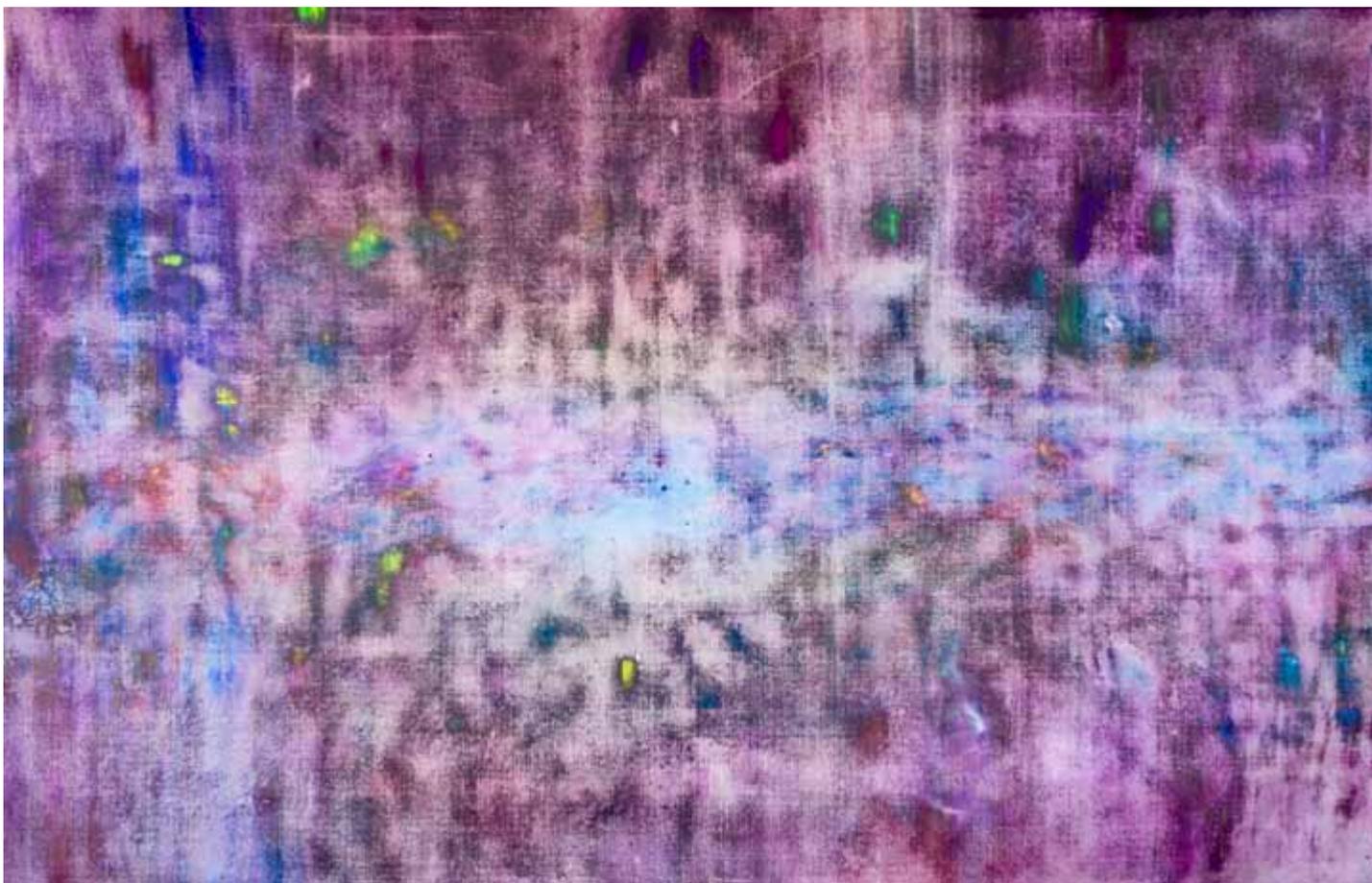
Oil on canvas

72 x 96 in.



Forêt Verte

Oil on canvas
72 x 96 in.



A Painting In Reverse

Sand and Oil on canvas

80 x 120 in.



Suspended Animation

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



Cell Life

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



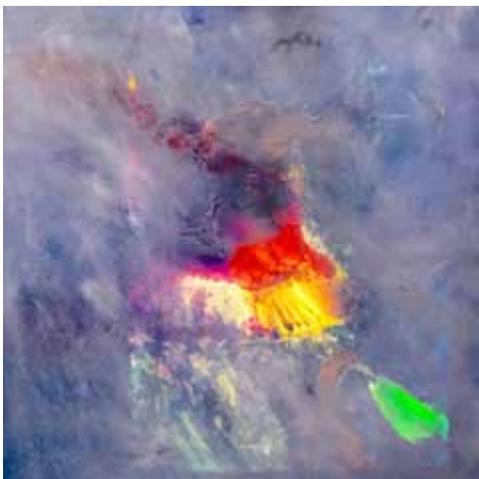
Sunburst

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



Up and Up

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



Truth Serum

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



Cyclamen

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



Petal Freeze

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



The Butterfly Effect

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



The Ice Storm

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



The Crab

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



Color Spectrum

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



Tailspin

Oil on canvas with LED backlight
48 x 48 in.



Contagion

Oil on canvas
72 x 60 in.



So Flows The Current

Oil on canvas
60 x 72 in.



Light in August

Oil on canvas

56 x 82 in.



Prussian Skies

Oil on canvas
48.5 x 74 in.



Slipstream

Oil on canvas
48 x 48 in.



Silent Spring

Oil on canvas
48 x 72 in.



The Pelican Brief

Oil on canvas
48 x 72 in.



Pride

Oil on canvas
54 x 75 in.



Symphony

Oil on canvas
30 x 50 in.



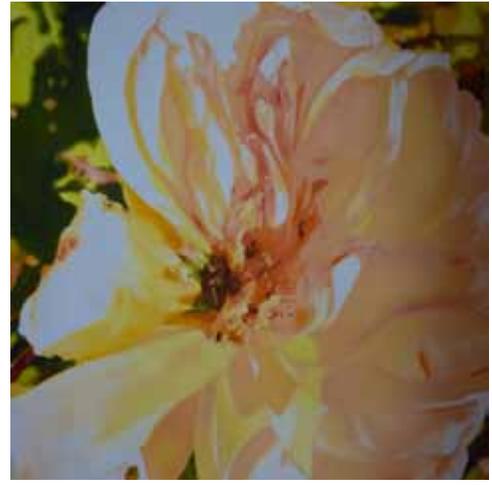
The Sweltering Sky

Oil on canvas
35 x 48 in.



Voluptuous

Acrylic and Oil on canvas
40 x 40 in.



Grace

Acrylic and Oil on canvas
40 x 40 in.



Elegance

Acrylic and Oil on canvas
40 x 36 in.



Capricious

Acrylic and Oil on canvas
30 x 26 in.



Splendor

Acrylic and Oil on canvas
36 x 20 in.



Provence

Acrylic and Oil on canvas
48 x 36 in.

Biography

The artist lives and works in Los Angeles (U.S.A.). After an acclaimed debut with her New York studio collection, TriBeCa in summer 2011, Holloman has had five international solo shows. *Coeur Libre*, exhibited at the Pantheon Town Hall (Paris, April 2012) sold out in its first week. This show was followed by *Free Falling* only three months later at The Ateneo Veneto and ran during the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale to a record breaking attendance and was the first exhibition to contain two 14 ft murals. Her third solo show, *All The World Inside*, took place in Berlin in spring 2013 and included 17 large scale murals in three rooms at the Grand Palazzo Italia. In summer 2013, her painting *Swell* was picked for the group show, *Nell'Acqua Capisco* at the Venice Art Biennale and was chosen for the official catalogue.

The Fifth Element, was held in Paris (Galerie Joseph) in July 2014 and has met with a public increasingly seduced by the poetic emotion that emerges from the works of Laurel.

This show was followed in October 2014 by an invitation at the International Contemporary Art Biennale in Buenos Aires (Argentina). *The Reach* and *Map of The World* were chosen for the installation. *The Reach* was awarded by the First prize of the Biennale in the paintings category and Laurel won the Banco Ciudad Award for the Best Work in all categories.

In November 2015 (London) , the artist presented "The Innocents", a portrait exhibition of women and children with subjects from 18 months to late 80's with an emotional exploration of how life changes us, as we age.

Laurel Holloman earned her Bachelor of Arts at The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill majoring in performance art and visual art. She continued her studies at UCLA and the British American Drama Academy in London alternating between theatre and visual art.

www.laurelholloman.net

Exposition:

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