

Maureen St. Vincent

Fête Galantes

January 8 - February 5, 2022

Moskowitz Bayse is pleased to present *Fête Galantes*, an exhibition of new works by Oakland-based artist Maureen St. Vincent. *Fête Galantes* is the artist's first solo presentation in Los Angeles, and will be installed in our Viewing Room from January 8, 2022 – February 5, 2022.

What is it about the snail that makes it so suggestive? Maybe it's the gastropod's agonizingly languorous pace, or its wriggling, lipped sides, or its penchant for self-lubrication. Wait... suggestive of *what*, exactly? Maureen St. Vincent's recent works consider history, symbol, and the body through their attendant visual indicators. Wielding a carefully balanced pastiche of the Rococo fetish for ornament and material, the artist's dreamlike jaunts prod at the neoliberal sequestration of sexuality and sensuality in art, arguing instead for their return to unmuffled prominence.

Surreal innuendo pervades the artist's prelapsarian pastels and their curvy, painted frames. Autonomous legs become winding fauna and grass searches and sways, curling gently through fleshy apertures. In *Self-Impregnators*, furry moths repeat their hot red frame, activating it and highlighting the human body's larval bits. At times, the artist's works and frames dissolve into one another, echoing the Late Baroque tendency toward holistic visual experience, unfolding across material and space. Coded form rhythmically expands and contracts like breath at the threshold of drawing and frame, inviting the viewer to consider the work's procedural aspects.

Did the uvular violet frame in *Palissy Hussy* occasion the central lemniscate's swollen lower ridge, or was it conceived after, as its natural mate? The squirming tentacle nestling into place offers scant clarity. In *Fête Galantes*, the frame's scalloped ridges edge into the picture, bodily and vaguely voyeuristic. *Slow Hips* features a pair of bodiless legs riding high on a grassy snail, bordered by a schematized wooden pelvis.

St. Vincent's figures—denatured, detached, and often made of their surroundings - melt in and out of solidity as they're probed and penetrated. In a ribald abandonment of current figurative orthodoxy, which often holds sensuality and selfhood in rigid opposition, St. Vincent's frolickers might just be enjoying themselves. The snail becomes the bridge between in-your-face bawdiness, wary readings of erotic form and symbol, and an elegant abandonment of good taste.

Embedding Rococo lightness in vibrant Bauhaus-inflected frames certainly stokes the festering desire to abandon art-historical hang-ups and embrace raw instinct. Permissiveness becomes power, with the artist granting her viewer license to pursue self-liberation in any of its various incarnations—esthetic and otherwise. Leaning in with a joke during the evening's important speech, St. Vincent wryly identifies crossed signals and inherited symbols, suggesting that somewhere along the way, form forgot how to enjoy itself.