

HEADSTONE

Urgent Beings

Ashley Eliza Williams

July 2 – 31, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Headstone is delighted to announce *Urgent Beings* by Ashley Eliza Williams. This is her eleventh solo exhibition consisting of twenty-seven oil paintings on paper. Using what seems peculiarly familiar in the natural world, Williams introduces theoretical languages of the pictorial kind: vibrant, brilliant, and soothing. Her perspective empathetically documents her experiences with moth-like “night pollinators”, sentient rocks, and other travelers. Each painting thus becomes a survey of devotion: an explorer’s guide from a species we’ve yet to encounter.

In our current global environmental crisis, *Urgent Beings* calls attention to messages and warning signs from quiet organisms being *interrupted* by human noise and industrial sound pollution. Williams is concerned we may miss “opportunities for repair and begin to lose quieter transmissions: desire expressed by mating fruit bats, the grief of a bereaved elephant, or expressions of interspecies’ mutualism and care.” Williams is sensitive to communication and seemingly obvious devices. She writes, “as a child I struggled with extreme shyness and I envied nonverbal organisms. I dreamed of being able to express myself with bioluminescence or by quietly passing information through a network of fungal filaments, instead of spoken words.” It seems only fitting that she then uses a series of brushes and paint on a surface to formulate queries and document daily “communication attempts” with other living beings, throwing the standards of what is and is not ‘living’ aside. Instead, we are given the opportunity to dream with our eyes open.

From Williams’s initial conceptual basis, one is reminded of The Carpenter’s bizarre and perhaps most interesting cover of the Canadian rock band, Klaatu, *Calling Occupants of Interplanetary Craft*. In the lyrics, Karen Carpenter uses the radio to dial into contacting other beings, pivoting from ambient sound to Broadway musical references. Like Williams’s paintings, it’s colorful, curious, and genuine. Her works turn the conversation to listening rather than a one-sided venture in romanticism (an endearing sentiment that is quintessentially The Carpenters). An initial glance at Williams’s work feels like an homage to Georgia O’Keefe, Hilma af Klint, and Cy Twombly while maintaining an innovative, deep dive into science fiction and storytelling; Williams guides us through observing and sensing via a world of flora and fauna much like contemporary painters Ever Baldwin, Rachel Hayden, and Ryan Mrozowski.

Confirming her commitment to the living is her craft. Observing the layering of color, one can appreciate the depth and attention imperative to capturing organic objects and creatures alike. Williams loves the World she studies while her internal *world* takes note and percolates. The invitation for collective discussion has been initiated, leaving the written word in its limited and insular capacities. Oh, how we yearn to be understood by all things, all beings, all together.

Ashley Eliza Williams is a painter, sculptor, and interdisciplinary artist making work about interspecies communication, non-human language, and finding alternative and more empathic ways to engage with nature and with each other. Williams has exhibited in solo and group shows nationally and internationally including at The University of Colorado Art Museum, Hersbruck Museum (Germany), The National Center for Atmospheric Research (CO), Bronx Museum Project Space (NY), The New York Hall of Science, and Wasserman Projects in Detroit (MI). Her work is represented by K Contemporary Art in Denver and has been featured in publications such as *New American Paintings*, *The Denver Post*, and *The Washington Post*.

Williams was a recent Massachusetts Fellowship awardee at Mass MoCA Studios. She was also a Swan Fellow for Art and Writing at Vermont Studio Center, a Berkshire Taconic Arts Foundation Fellow, and an Aunspaugh Fellow at The University of Virginia. Recent grants include a Mass MoCA Assets-for-Artists project grant, a Massachusetts Cultural Council grant, and a Pre-Fulbright research travel grant for summer research in Norway. Recent residencies include Millay Arts, Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, Shoals Marine Laboratory, Anderson Ranch, RedLine Denver, and the Shangyuan Art Museum, China. Williams has held Visiting Artist and faculty positions at The University of Colorado and at Colorado State. She earned her MFA from The University of Colorado at Boulder and her dual honors BA from The University of Virginia.

Williams often works with scientists, including at Harvard. The Museum of Comparative Zoology, and McDonald Observatory in Texas. She is also a founding member of The Sprechgesang Institute, a NYC-based interdisciplinary collective working on projects at the intersection of visual art, performance, journalism, and science. She lives in Western Massachusetts.

Headstone is an artist-run, for-profit contemporary art gallery located in Kingston, New York, dedicated to showing two-person and solo exhibitions. The 1,100 sq. ft gallery space was created by artists Lauren Aitken and Chase Folsom. The gallery is deeply committed to our artists and their ideas, providing them with a beautiful contemporary space and necessary support to help them foster and fulfill their artistic vision. It is with considerate curation and our vast love of the art world that we bring together and introduce emerging and established artists, some who have yet to benefit from wider critical and commercial attention. We believe the arts should be equitable and accessible to anyone who would like to engage. Through artist exhibitions we hope that Headstone can collectively bring people together, create community, expand connections and become an engaging, diverse melting pot of artists, creatives, collectors, and community members.

Opening Reception Saturday July 2, 2022 5pm-8pm
Gallery Hours: Friday - Sunday Noon- 5pm
Or By Appointment

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