

Emily Sundblad

Charline

27 January — 4 March 2017

curated by Anne Pontégnie

Press Release

In west texas I walked with a friend in a canyon where few people have set foot since the Comanches. Enjoying a fantasy of spinsterhood in the arid mountains.

A pleasurable drying out, a comforting silence. A body that rests best alone.

Friend with the most poisonous snakes and spiders. Welcoming, fearless and feminist. Wind whistling through my holes.

At the clinic the air is thick with tired rage. Inner deserts are asked to grow fat and juicy things, cacti are asked to bloom. And they do sometimes. Sometimes. Everyone is in a hurry. Hospital colors and textures always the same whether life or death is produced. The doctor is impatient. The race is on. Tumbleweed down the cliff. Zika. Sleeplessness. Is the failure to produce life a death? To the desert spinster it is a blessing.

After 80 the body needs sleep. Naps punctuate the day. The fire crackles and the days pass. I talk to my mother at night. I talk to my mother at night. We talk and smoke in the kitchen.

— Emily Sundblad

Emily Sundblad's painted works are light, refined, joyful and modest. Using the techniques of gouache, ink, oils, pastels or watercolours, she records moments of daily life or events that mark her existence. A stay at the Colony Hotel enforced by the advent of Hurricane Sandy and a weekend at the Kentucky Derby were the inspirations for her most outstanding series. Sundblad is also a gallerist, singer, performer and, in general, a radiant yet also discreet presence in today's art world. By endorsing these different roles, she succeeds in giving them new appeal while also eluding being defined by them. *Reena Spraulings* – a gallery on the Lower East Side of New York that she runs with artist John Kelsey – is a place of freedom and encounters where experiences of all kinds are possible, and artists like Matias Faldbakken, Klara Lidén, Alex Israel and Seth Price are able to show their most accomplished projects. Her singing recitals and performances provide the opportunity for friendships to be struck up with musicians like Pete Drungle and Matt Sweeney, or other artists like Juliana Huxtable. She interprets their texts or classic punk and rock songs that she adapts to classical melodies. As a painter, she also works with Jutta Koether and John Kelsey under the name *Reena Spraulings*.

The exhibition of her work at Xavier Hufkens is a story of friendship, art, admiration and sisterhood. Conceived as a tribute, it contains portraits of the artist Charline von Heyl that Emily Sundblad produced all along 2016. Von Heyl is an impassioned painter who has battled to win a place in the very masculine world of German and American abstract painting. Engaged entirely in her medium, von Heyl has devoted her life to reinventing it. Sundblad, who restricts herself to more classic techniques and reveals different facets of herself in different artistic personalities, here displays her admiration for the determination of her friend. The exhibition can perhaps also be considered a mirror that reflects what the two artists share in common. Both northern Europeans who emigrated to New York, they each arouse the fascination of

Xavier Hufkens

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their peers and exercise a benevolent yet exacting influence on the artists by whom they are surrounded. Persuaded that the art world is a place of suffering and splendour, constraint and freedom, they are among those rare artists that still embody a little of that modern spirit by which artists are supposed to lead exemplary and independent lives.

Anne Pontégnie, exhibition curator

On Friday 27 January, Emily Sundblad will perform with the pianist Pete Drungle and the Arcanes Quartet for a concert at the *Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel*.

Pete Drungle (b. 1972) is an award-winning composer, pianist and sound designer who has made music with Ornette Coleman, Yoko Ono, The Kronos Quartet, and many others. He has composed scores for film, video, dance, theatre, art installation and performance, and has collaborated with visual and performance artists including Rudolf Stingel, Urs Fischer, Jeff Koons, Agathe Snow, and others. His music compositions, performances and sound design installations have accompanied exhibitions world-wide, including at Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris, France), MoCA (Los Angeles, CA, USA), the Whitney Biennial (New York, NY, USA), the Cannes Film Festival (Cannes, France), The Serpentine Gallery (London, UK) and others.

Emily Sundblad (b. 1977, Dalsjöfors, Sweden) lives and works in New York. Recent exhibitions include *The ALMANAC 14: Emily Sundblad, Ray Charles*, Le Consortium, Dijon (2014); *Absolut*, White Flag Projects, St. Louis (2013); *Emily Sundblad/Margaret Lee*, Off Vendome, Düsseldorf (2013). She was also part of the Whitney Biennial (2014).

Emily is the founder and director of Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York. She sings with several groups, including bands such as Tsvillingarna and A Night of Country with Richard Maxwell. She is a member of several art groups, such as Reena Spaulings and Grand Openings.

For further inquiries please contact the gallery at info@xavierhufkens.com or at +32(0)2 639 67 30. For press enquiries contact anazoe@xavierhufkens.com

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