

Keltie Ferris was born in 1977 in Louisville, Kentucky. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Selected solo exhibitions include KLEMM's in Berlin (2016); Mitchell-Innes & Nash in New York City (2015); *Keltie Ferris: Doomsday Boogie* at Santa Monica Museum in Santa Monica, California (2014); *Body Prints* at Chapter NY in New York City (2014); *KF+CM 4EVER* at Horton Gallery in New York City (2010); and *Man Eaters* at Kemper Museum in Kansas City, Missouri (2009). Selected group exhibitions include *If Color Could Kill* at Salena Gallery of Long Island University in New York (2016); *Abstract America Today* at Saatchi Gallery in London (2014); *Wanton Mobility*, curated by Arielle Bier at KLEMM's in Berlin (2014); *2014 Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts* at Academy of Arts and Letters in New York City (2014); and *Raw/Cooked: Ulrike Müller* at the Brooklyn Museum in Brooklyn, New York (2012).

Awards and honors include the Rosenthal Family Foundation Award in Painting, The Academy of Arts and Letters (2014); the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Grant, Artist Pension Trust, and the Carol Schlosberg Memorial Prize for excellence in painting at the Yale School of Art (2006). Ferris received a BFA in 2004 from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Nova Scotia, Canada and an MFA from Yale School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut (2006).

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MITCHELL-INNES & NASH



Keltie Ferris

BODY PRINTS AND PAINTINGS

FEBRUARY 2 – APRIL 2, 2016 | UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Keltie Ferris: Particle and Skin

Keltie Ferris's recent body prints are irrevocably bound to her better-known abstract paintings, in which her palette knife and her distinctive, layered, spray-gun washes zip in neon brights, graphite grays, and chromatic pastels. These techniques buzz with references to modernism, textile weave, graffiti scrawl, ancient glyphs, and nocturnal cityscapes. As Ferris works back and forth between the two mediums, the hard-won immediacy of the body prints cannot help but inform the paintings. Begun three years ago, the prints are an extension of her physical and layered approach to image-making, but their emotional tenor is altogether different: the prints are a means of bringing bodily content into her work.

Ferris begins the body prints by pouring oil over her body. She then calibrates the positioning and pressure of her lubricated hands, arms, torso, legs, and sometimes face as she lowers herself onto a sheet of paper, whose workspace must submit to her oiled body's physical dimensions. This substrate cannot exceed Ferris's pressurized moves or reach—but that said, the potential to grow and expand these orientations is boundless. The awaiting surface then becomes an open universe on which to record the imprint of her actions, which are invisible and colorless until she applies layers of colored powdered pigments to the paper. And then some alchemical magic kicks in: body parts emerge and recede, while articulated clothing folds and the perfect imprint of shirt buttons animate the indeterminate figurative images that lie beneath them, as if one can see both the inside and outside of the body at the same time.

The body prints in *Keltie Ferris: Body Prints and Paintings* were made in four different locations: a residency in rural Connecticut, two temporary studios (one in Los Angeles, the other in Woodstock, New York) and her Brooklyn studio. Each location proposes a new emotional tone, with an atmospheric pitch akin to Jasper Johns's lithograph *Skin with O'Hara Poem*, 1963–65. The imprinted residues of her moves often appear cloud-like; visually echoing O'Hara's words, they "go soft," "change color," and "puff up, disperse." Indeed, we feel the weather hovering at the edges of the prints; on occasion a wider zone of heat and light will reach the center, metastasizing in and around a layered field of overlaid glyph-like ink strokes. In this regard, the prints align with Ferris's approach to her paintings: "Often I think of my paintings in terms of theater seats—a fake world surrounded by a larger atmospheric light world."

In each studio location, Ferris encounters elemental and pragmatic factors that determine the final results of the prints. Weather conditions are key: dry or damp air, moisture, hot or cold temperatures, humidity, working in or out of doors—each of these situations affects the density of the rubbed and layered pigments, how they adhere (or don't) to the oiled trace, the look and feel of the marks themselves, and Ferris's comfort level in creating the work. The unavoidable debris and muckiness of the process, including some sticky body parts and the rags left behind after wiping excess pigment from the paper, challenge her durational aplomb, especially when working at colder temperatures in a showerless studio. But whether she is naked or dons her denim studio clothes, her figurative imprint always owns the page.

Ferris is literally "in" the body prints as both maker and solo performer. She acknowledges a narcissistic pleasure in the hidden performative side of her work, and alludes to this in *Narcissus* (2013–14), a body print that bears a shadowy resemblance to the six-petaled polymorphic flower. While the earliest prints have a certain tentativeness about them—they appear slightly evasive and detached, raw, elemental, stark to the bone—the prints done in Woodstock are lighter, more buoyant, more solidly locked in. Under a deceptively hazy brightness, twisted profiles, splayed legs, and outstretched arms emerge and recede across an increasingly layered surface. Even though we see hands pressing against an invisible plane, these are not trapped bodies.

A figurative ambiguity is imbued in all the prints, but the newest prints, done in Brooklyn, seem somehow tougher as a denser concentration of metaphoric possibilities emerge. In these, the body images possess a certain dandy-like swagger, like a replicating Warhol *Elvis*; often two or three figures occupy a single print. Ferris also seems to use her body to create shapes from her lexicon of painted imagery—an asterisk, an X, a ziggurat, a square, a rectangle—and the color palette shifts from earlier wintery grays to discordant, multi-chromatic primaries. As the prints become more layered, they often include a scaffolding of graphic linear strokes or geometric motifs that echo bodily gestures—for example, outstretched arms and legs become an assertive X that marks territory with a libidinous energy all its own. These prints are very much about what has been left behind, the trace of a physical presence dispersing or transforming.

Both the body prints and the paintings follow their own logic, always working out of a few basic forms and crisscrossing ideas while endlessly shape-shifting into unexpected permutations. Ferris is quoted as saying (authoritatively, and without a hint of irony) that "sometimes I think of my paintings as people." But the body prints "are more particularly me." They are her gestural moves anchored in a particular body, various selves all part of a multitudinous Self. Their insistent physical presence is as much about an attitude toward process as it is about introducing the figure into a previously abstract vocabulary, as though her paintings can't contain enough of her willful determination to share her aspirations with the world.

The body prints capture different sides of these aspirations, and they indeed contain multitudes. They are not only self-portraits; they function as important trajectories that lead outward to the atmospheric world of Ferris's paintings and inward to more personal states of being. Increasingly intertwined with her paintings, these body prints allow Ferris to further stake her claim as an artist with far-reaching aspirations who is "...trying to keep all the paths alive."

Corinna Ripps Schaming
Curator

Exhibition Checklist



A+R+G+O, 2015
Acrylic and oil on canvas
96 x 130 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



Blueprint, 2015
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
30 1/8 x 22 1/2 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



Jack, 2015
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
40 1/8 x 26 inches
Collection of George Freeman



Narcissus, 2013-14
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
30 1/8 x 22 1/4 inches
Collection of Jesse Penridge and
Harriet Salmon



Center, 2015
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
40 x 23 1/8 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



oRiOn, 2015
Acrylic and oil on canvas
72 x 60 inches
Private collection, courtesy the
artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash,
New York



Venus of Tan-Tan, 2013-14
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
40 1/4 x 26 1/8 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



Facets, 2015
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
40 1/8 x 26 1/8 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



Sidestep, 2015
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
48 x 36 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



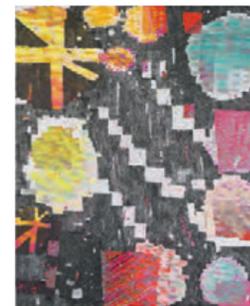
Bonjour Monsieur Ferris, 2012
Oil and acrylic on canvas
110 x 88 inches
Collection of David Madee



Floret, 2015
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
40 1/4 x 26 1/8 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



Teams, 2015
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
47 3/8 x 51 3/4 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



*O*P*E*N*, 2012
Oil, acrylic and pastel on canvas
95 x 76 inches
Private Collection, New York,
courtesy Pettit Art Partners



Husbands, 2015
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
40 1/4 x 26 1/8 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



Filet, 2013-14
Oil and powdered pigment
on paper
40 1/4 x 26 1/8 inches
Courtesy the artist and
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York



00>><<00, 2011
Oil, acrylic, oil pastel and spray
paint on canvas
80 x 80 inches
Private Collection, courtesy the
artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash,
New York



Jack, 2015, oil and powdered pigment on paper, 40 1/8 x 26 inches. Collection of George Freeman

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