

Maren Karlson,

Cypher

25 June—30 July, 2022

6 Minerva Street, London

Not to exercise all the power at one's disposal is to endure the void. This is contrary to all the laws of nature. Grace alone can do it. Grace fills empty spaces but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void. [...] To accept a void in ourselves is supernatural. Where is the energy to be found for an act which has nothing to counterbalance it? The energy has to come from elsewhere. Yet first there must be a tearing out, something desperate has to take place, the void must be created. Void: the dark night. [...] To love truth means to endure the void and, as a result, to accept death. Truth is on the side of death.

—Simone Weil, “Gravity and Grace”

Soft Opening,

MAREN KARLSON *CYPHER*
at SOFT OPENING

The experience of looking at Maren Karlson's paintings is one of uncanny recognition: a simultaneous coming to and an evacuation of the senses. In *Cypher*, we encounter the artist as she repeatedly transforms *either-or* into *and-also*: man made devices and-also nature's most intricate forms, the sublime and-also the abhorrent, the space and-also the void. Through this conscious multiplicity, Karlson renders static ideas of existence contingent and fluid, a compelling or worrisome proposition depending on who you're talking to.

Regardless of the varied and otherworldly character of many of the forms she depicts, all of Karlson's motifs attest to dynamism, ecstasy, and pathos. The living leads her to the invisible, to the vulnerable, sometimes the shadowy or the unseen. Karlson detaches forms from organism and grid alike, and in their newfound isolation, conjures a sense of spirituality as well as a relationship to liveliness. Her combination of freehand drawing and painterly precision result in pillowy compositions anchored by a strong sense of line.

In the works on view as part of *Cypher*, Karlson's interests in body, landscape, and structure coalesce. Her paintings inhabit the intersection of a shift in perception and an assessment of reality, cosmically penetrating a geometric process. Many of the works possess what Karlson has described as an "anti-petrifying effect," a reminder that any interest in death is only another expression of interest in life. Indeed, one is struck by forms that recall a rib cage, spine, or perhaps a tomb, as much as by the sensation that Karlson is pulling us closer to something redolent of death in order to enliven in us a stronger, more certain sense of life.

— Isabel Parkes

Viewing Room (L-R)

Sigil I, 2022
Oil on canvas
60 × 90 cm

Machines in the head,
2022
Oil on canvas
30 × 40 cm

*Vagus (the wheels
my masters)*, 2022
Oil on canvas
70 × 220 cm

Cypher, 2022
Oil on canvas
40 × 50 cm

Sigil II, 2022
Oil on canvas
40 × 50 cm

Lumen, 2022
Oil on canvas
85 × 130 cm

Maren Karlson (b. 1988) lives and works in Berlin. The artist was recently included in the exhibition *Drawing in the Continuous Present* at The Drawing Center, New York (2022). Past solo and two-person exhibitions include: *Nodulara* at Ashley, Berlin (2021); *Counsel* at Springsteen, Baltimore (2021) with Kira Scerbin; *Petal's Path* at in lieu, Los Angeles (2020); *Rats dream about the places they want to explore* at 427 gallery, Riga (2019); *Hear the lizards listening* at Mélange Gallery, Cologne (2019) with Claude Eigan and *Happy Dark* at Interstate Projects, New York (2017). Selected group exhibitions include: *HU* at Real Pain, Los Angeles (2020); *Perhaps A Window?* at stadium, Berlin (2020); *Introducing* at in lieu, Los Angeles (2020); *Cloak of Mercy* at Horse & Pony, Berlin (2019); *Nightshades* at Polansky Gallery, Brno (2019) and *Fantasia* at Steve Turner Gallery, Los Angeles (2019).