

PRESS RELEASE

THE SMOKE DETECTOR AND THE WATCHTOWER

November 11, 2021 – January 21, 2022

Davidson Gallery proudly presents *The Smoke Detector and the Watchtower*, an exhibition of new paintings by Boo Saville. The exhibition features 15 new color field and dichromatic figurative works by Saville painted over the last year and a half. The show title is taken from the book *The Body Keeps the Score*, by Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk, a psychiatrist and leading scholar and researcher of post-traumatic stress and its effects. Saville read Van der Kolk's book during the lockdown in the UK and was drawn to the ways in which the book explores how traumatic events and experiences change the way people perceive the world.

Van der Kolk uses the terms 'smoke detector' and 'watchtower' to refer to two parts of the human brain, the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex, respectively. The amygdala controls some of our primitive impulses – intuition, fear, and sensation. The prefrontal cortex determines our reactions to our environments. These separate but connected systems serve as the starting point for Saville's two divergent series of paintings that exist in the same body of work: expansive color fields and figurative or descriptive monochromatic paintings. For Saville, the works are deeply personal; the artist remembers dreaming exclusively in black and white as a child, for instance. Thus, the figurative works take on a somewhat surreal quality of that liminal state, bordering on photorealist but being devoid of color. Meanwhile, the abstracts are pure emotion, stemming from the subconscious and filled with Saville's own experiences ranging from joy to personal loss.

Saville has arranged the work into three areas: Time, Metaphor, and Moons. This method is a useful way to catalogue and categorize different areas of painting but also addresses the invisible forces that shift and direct the world around us. She has added frames to some of the works which serve to represent the reduced boundaries of our lives during lockdown, the seemingly ever-present frame around our computer screens, and even the encasing of our skull around our brain housing the cognitive systems that experience the changing world.

Boo Saville (British, b.1980) graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art, London, in 2004. Saville's solo exhibitions include *Chimera*, Davidson Gallery, New York (2017), *Polycephaly*, TJ Boulting, London (2014), *Idolum*, Studio Giangaleazzo Visconti, Milan (2010), and *Laid Bare*, Martin Summers Fine Art, London (2008). Saville was a nominee for the Sovereign Painting Prize in both 2007 and 2011, and in 2008, she worked on a residency at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, and was included in the group exhibition *True Colours* at Newport Street Gallery in London. Saville's work has been acquired by collections including the Museum of New and Old Art, Tasmania; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art; Murderme; Soho House; and Collezione Maramotti. She is featured in Francesca Gavin's books *Hell Bound: New Gothic Art* (2008), *100 New Artists* (2011), and *50 Contemporary Women Artists* (2018). Saville lives and works in Margate, England; this is her second solo exhibition at Davidson Gallery.