

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



Q&A: Sterling Ruby

The Los Angeles based multidisciplinary artist Sterling Ruby takes five from his preparation for his upcoming solo show at Gagosian Gallery to chat about his spray painting work and the importance of studio time

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Describing the Los Angeles based artist Sterling Ruby as multidisciplinary is a total understatement. The master of the studio sometimes creates pieces of multiple pieces that sometimes run into the thousands. His works run the gamut from eighteen-foot tall urethane sculptures moulded into stalagmites, bleached and repurposed scraps and fabrics arranged in canvas collages to his popular abstract spray paintings.

Ruby's creative circle of friends includes designer Raf Simons, who he has collaborated with extensively, and his body of work is scattered throughout the globe in both public art institutions, private collections and in the public outdoor sphere. Before his upcoming solo show at Gagosian – where he will bring many of his spray paintings to the gallery – he gives us a brief insight into his mind and work processes.

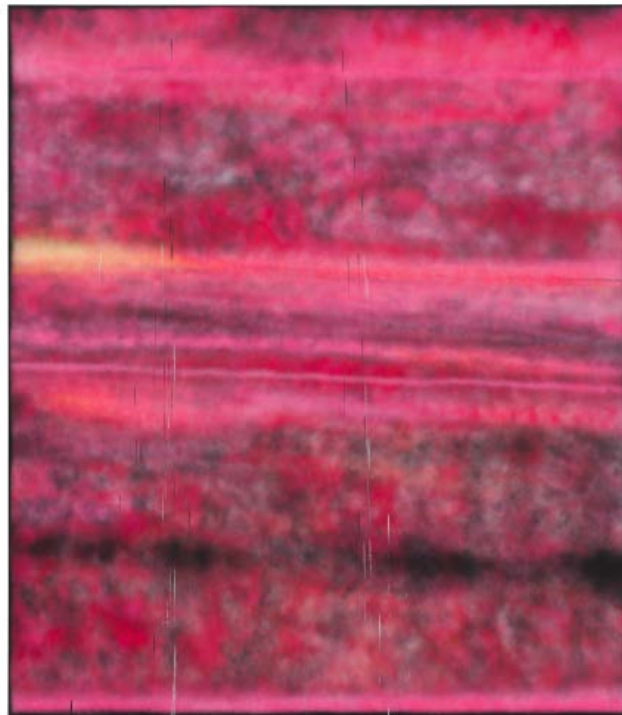
This autumn sees the start of your first comprehensive Asia tour. What kind of works will you be presenting to different audiences in different cities?

This fall, in separate locations throughout Asia, I will be presenting different bodies of work. At the Gwangju Biennial, four large-scale and fully operational stainless steel stove sculptures will be installed. The Taipei Biennial includes a survey of my collages and drawings produced over the last decade, and an installation of textile works, paintings and urethane sculptures will be at the Ullens Center in Beijing. The VIVIDS exhibition is a new suite of spray paint paintings in a

fluorescent pink palette. I decided to do a more focused show of spray paintings at Gagosian Gallery Hong Kong, which is something I have rarely done with that particular medium.

What does the title of the Gagosian show, VIVIDS, allude to?

I tried to make these paintings as vibrant as possible. I wanted them to have a radiance that seemed almost electric. I live in the mountains of Los Angeles and my studio is downtown so I have this routine of driving back and forth, which is always a contemplative time for me. There are amazing sunrises and sunsets where I live, horizon lines that transform the urban sprawl into a meditative celestial plane. Depending on the season these sunrises and sunsets can be extremely vivid and colourful.



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I read that you grew up immersed in skateboarding culture, which a lot of artists cite as their starting point for graffiti and street art work. How do your spray paintings reference or touch upon street or public art culture?

While I know that there is an entire genre of art work made by graffiti artists, I think that my take on it is a bit different. I continuously saw spray paint being used to mark territory by gangs in the streets of Los Angeles... drug warfare played out in aesthetics, a power struggle of tagging that almost always became atmospheric and abstract due to the intense back and forth of rival gang members. The desire to make paintings was an absolute reaction to seeing graffiti and territorial disputes writ large in the streets, almost as if a case study. I found it almost impossible to ignore my generation's continued struggle to find ways to make a meaningful painting. I like to think that I have found a way to make spray paint abstract.



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Much has also been said of your ability to jump from medium to medium. Can you talk about your approach to integrating all of your different media and materials?

I spend a great deal of time in the studio. I like the freedom and privacy it provides. I use many different media as a kind of schizophrenic labour strategy. It seems very easy now to say it, but it has taken me years to convey that this scattered routine belongs within a coherent trajectory. Works may not look the same formally, they might not even be of the same medium, but there is a lineage that links everything that I do together, and the studio helps me to figure out the catalysts between the pieces.

What next?

I'm moving into a new studio. That is the big project for me right now along with finishing up work on a number of publications.