

## GAGOSIAN



### GAGOSIAN ROME PRESENTS NEW WORKS BY SARAH SZE

Sophie Killip



*Feature image: Sarah Sze, First Time (Half-life), 2018 (detail), oil paint, acrylic paint, archival paper, UV stabilizers, adhesive, tape, ink and acrylic polymers, shellac, and water-based primer on wood, 84 × 105 × 3 1/2 inches (213.4 × 266.7 × 8.9 cm) © Sarah Sze. Photo: Rob McKeever*

*We speak to contemporary American artist, Sarah Sze, about her new works and her latest exhibition at the Gagosian Rome.*

A global network of art galleries specialising in modern and contemporary art, Gagosian galleries around the world exhibit some of the most influential artists of the 20th and 21st century. This winter season, the Gagosian in Rome is presenting new works by American artist, Sarah Sze.

Born in Boston and now living in New York, Sze is a prolific artist who has collections in galleries including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris; earlier this year, she was also inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Following her participation in the Venice Biennale in 2013 and 2015, the new show at Gagosian Rome will be Sze's first gallery exhibition in Italy.



For her latest exhibition, Sze is displaying the latest of her *Timekeeper* series, which began in 2015. Created as a video installation, the piece will transform the Gagosian Rome's oval gallery into a *lantern magica* – an immersive environment that is part sculpture, part cinema. With her gallery exhibition running until January 26th, 2019, we spoke to Sze to find out more about her and her latest work:

### **What inspires your artwork?**

My work is about the passage of time. In sculptures I use common objects to locate the viewer in a specific moment and place, while in paintings and video installations, I work with the materiality—and the breakdown—of images. I'm inspired by the pace at which we receive information in the form of illuminated pixels and moving fragments, and how the digital age has blurred the lines between real objects and their representations.

I look out for moments where time and space seem to be disconnected or compressed in some way. Moments where inside and outside, past and present are confused—like when a car's headlights suddenly slide across the living room, or an advertisement pops up on the computer screen, reflected in the studio window. In my work, I create situations in which these types of phenomena are made possible, creating models of chance using a wide range of traditional and nonconventional materials.



### **What are the highlights/challenges with working with a range of mediums?**

I've always shifted between mediums as a way of discovering the infinite potential of a single idea, and of playing with the particular strengths of communication that different mediums possess. Though I started off studying painting and architecture, it was sculpture that really exploded the boundaries between painting, drawing, sculpture, and assemblage for me.

I've been making paintings, drawings, and prints alongside my sculptural installations for years now, so it was exciting to bring the two-dimensional works into the centre of my practice again. Now I think that centrality will never change. Painting has always been the perspective, the centre within my wider practice, now it's just plainly visible and accessible to the viewer.

### **Why is it important to you to work in both 2D and 3D?**

For me, there is a symbiotic relationship between 2D and 3D work. In other words, when I work on a flat surface, I am thinking of ways to create space, and when I'm installing a sculptural work, I look for moments where the elements seem to come together as an image—like many intersecting drawings or blueprints.



**Tell us about the stone sculpture that is on display at Crypta Balbi in Rome?**

The sculpture is titled *Split Stone (7:34)* and is the first in a series of similar outdoor stone sculptures that I have planned. To make the work, I sourced a natural granite boulder and had it split down the middle, creating two flat surfaces. An image of the sunset (that I took on my iPhone at 7:34pm) is embedded into the flat rock surfaces, like a geode revealing a sky instead of crystals or rock striations. Small circular cavities are carved into the rock surface, and then filled with colored pigment.

It's a sort of combination of the dot-matrix printing you see in newspaper ads or comics, and more traditional etching techniques, where ink would be embedded into the lines scratched into a copper plate, or a lithograph where the weight of the stone held the image. The sculpture also makes reference to gongshi, natural rocks often in interesting or unusual shapes that are traditionally studied and appreciated by Chinese scholars. I'm interested in the idea that the slow, natural formation of the rock itself, as a material, holds memories, and layers of time.

**How does it feel to be exhibiting in Italy for the first time since 2015?**

Italy is one of my favorite places in the world—to see the way that the layers of the ancient and the modern coexist here is always humbling and enlivening. It feels especially appropriate that I have had the opportunity now to show sculpture, paintings, and video, all made for specific natural and architectural environments. At the Venice Biennale in 2015, I installed work in a hidden garden (where visitors discovered it by chance); at Gagosian Rome, with this unique oval gallery, I could approach it like a magic lantern or planetarium.

At Crypta Balbi, the digital image of the sunset juxtaposed with the physical gravity and permanence of a natural boulder was a tension enhanced by the ruins of ancient and medieval Rome rising up around the sculpture. Installing these works in Italy has allowed me to think more deeply about Renaissance and Baroque artists' creation of total environments, in which paintings, sculptures, tapestries, and architectural elements were made in direct relation to one another—this was the natural expectation of art—all mediums intimately intertwined.



**What do you hope visitors to the exhibition at Gagosian Rome will take away from the experience?**

Just as this show has allowed me to expand the ways that I approach spaces as integral parts of the work, I hope that the exhibition will inspire visitors to consider the ways that physical and digital spaces are constantly changing and overlapping. For example, in the exhibition, the *Half-Life* paintings play with several image-making processes: the bleeding of light in photography; the dragging of color over a screen or plate in printmaking; the scumbling of oil paint across a textured surface; the breaking down of pixels in digital processing.

Though they result from specific technical processes, they are meant to be stages for the unexpected. Similar stages can be found throughout our daily lives, and, ideally, the exhibition will draw visitors' attention to them—slowing down the pace of information to make room for the surprising beauty of the banal, the glitches, and the gaps.