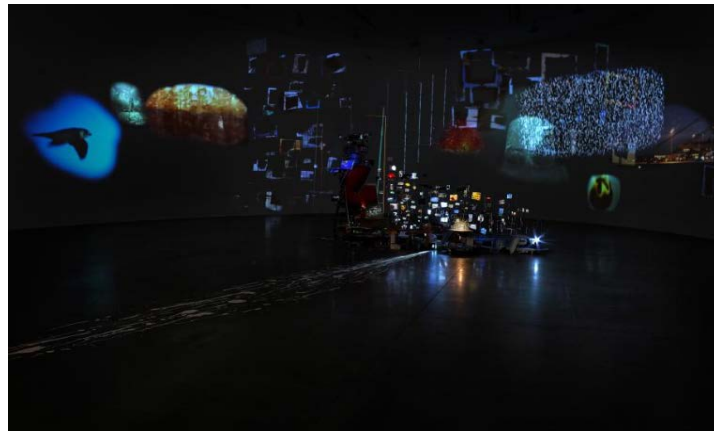


GAGOSIAN

Wallpaper*

Sarah Sze's alchemic wonders shake the Eternal City

Silvia Marchetti



Sarah Sze's first exhibition in Rome sees the Gagosian Gallery's elongated rotunda transformed into a 'magic lantern' that blurs the boundaries of reality and fiction. Photography: Matteo D'Eletto, M3 Studio. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian

If medieval alchemy had a modern face it would be that of American artist Sarah Sze. She picks everyday materials – archival paper, adhesive, tape, ink, acrylic polymers and steel – as the building blocks of her multimedia works, combining them into sublime concoctions. Bringing together sculpture, painting, photography and video, she blurs artistic boundaries to tease perception and stir emotion.

Sze's exhibition at the Gagosian Rome gallery, her first in the Eternal City, is a sensorial journey across space and time. The centrepiece, a video sculpture titled *Flash Point*, projects flickering images of animals, people and abstract symbols across the walls, transforming the oval room into a 'magic lantern'. It's a play on what is perceived and what remains locked in one's mind, calling to mind Plato's cave or T.S. Eliot's invisible line between 'conception' and 'creation'. The work inundates the senses and leaves the viewer's head spinning with one overwhelming, existential question: what is real, and what isn't?



First Time, oil paint, acrylic paint, archival paper, adhesive, tape, ink, acrylic polymers, shellac, water-based primer and wood, from the Half-Life series, 2018, by Sarah Sze. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian

‘I’ve always been interested in the ways in which we experience images as ephemeral objects, like passing thoughts, sometimes interconnected, sometimes disjointed; there is nothing linear about it,’ Sze says.

The viewer is no ordinary spectator, but is instead the protagonist of a happening. In the *Half-Life* painting series, viewers find themselves following a long trail of white paint across the floor, chasing a beam of light, oblivious to where it will lead.

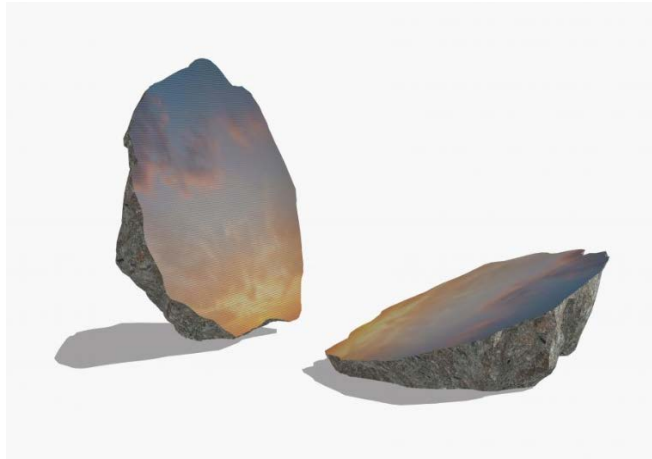


Ghost Print, oil paint, acrylic paint, archival paper, adhesive, tape, ink, acrylic polymers, shellac, water-based primer and wood, from the Half-Life series, 2018, by Sarah Sze. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian

‘I want the work to have the residue of improvisation,’ the artist remarks, ‘there is always room for the unexpected to sneak in and rearrange the space altogether: it’s when the unexpected enters that we feel most alert, most moved, and most alive.’

The metamorphosis of natural elements pervades Sze’s hybridised art. *Split Stone*, a new work set to join the show in November, is a huge geode split in two, revealing a resin sunset set against a dot-screen coloured sky, as if a slice of the Earth’s inner core had been exposed. The jagged surface of the granite clashes with the shiny sliver of sky. ‘By recording images in pixels and then fixing them in stone and ink, I want to explore the fragility of time and our desire for

weight and permanence in the face of both overwhelming natural forces and the ubiquitous images that surround us daily’.



A rendering of a new work, set to join the show in November, shows a huge georde split in two to reveal a resin sunset