

SI

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Ser Serpas: *Hall*
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Hall: an unwritten movie by Ser Serpas, at Swiss Institute New York

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If you are wondering how sculpture and painting, photography and performance can be reconciled into a single artwork that can simultaneously seduce collectors and curators, then you absolutely must get to know the artist Ser Serpas (Los Angeles, 1995). Since her recent international debut, her practice has made a mark on the international scene. Everyone is talking about her and everyone wants her work. Her art has set a new trend that unite the most impulsive collectors, ready to invest in a new object of desire, and the most purist curators, linked to the conceptual flourishing of the 60s and 70s. But how is this possible?



Ser Serpas, *Hall*, installation view, courtesy of the artist and Swiss Institute, NY

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The core of Ser Serpas' work is transience. The artist moves from painting to sculpture, from material to its representation, putting transitory and abandoned corporeality – both human and material – at the center of all this, between cuts and signs, breaks and assemblies but also hyper-consumption. This is also the trailer that constitutes *Hall*, the new exhibition that the American artist Ser Serpas presents at the Swiss Institute in New York until April 23, leaving her indelible mark once again after a series of exhibitions and stays in Geneva, Tbilisi, and Paris. Ser Serpas spreads and unites in her practice, and so she does on the two floors of the SI, where an extraordinary variety of images and bodies take over the space, immersing us in a state of desolation of living, abandonment and rejection.



Rafik Greiss with Ser Serpas, *By the Highway 4*, 2023, chromogenic print, 22 x 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ in., courtesy of the artist and Swiss Institute, NY

The pulsating heart of the exhibition is *Partition Play*. It is a ground installation consisting of a demolished crimson-colored wall, with pieces of demolished wall arranged on the structural metal grid covered in dust and shoe prints, as if someone had just walked over it. Barry Le Va's dispersive installations or the residues of Richard Serra's performances come to mind, but the intent is different. As already highlighted by Connie Butler, curator of the Hammer Museum in LA, for Ser Serpas, it is not the excess of capitalist production, but rather the consumptive abuse and waste that interest her selection. A sense of rejection, rupture and degradation pervades the exhibit. The artist immerses us in a state of abandonment, and this state is the glue that unites sculptural practice with the surrounding pictorial and photographic practices.



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As we turn around, we observe wooden boards or jute canvases filled with bodies that invade and occupy the entire surface. There is no title. There are no faces, only transient signs. The bodies are analyzed up close, as if to make us enter inside. Sores and rubbing, wounds and blood. Sweat. The painting is at times dense and at times sharp. It is the glue of lived bodies, hers or those of friends with whom she has just fought or shared, as well as strangers she has met on dating apps. Empty and lost bodies, now digital waste. This is where photographs – true teachers for her painting – become protagonists of waste. The concept of desolation expands from the trash around us, our waste, to our body. From the consumption of objects in sculpture to the consumption of bodies and intimacy in painting, a concept that can be conceptually and visually read in the work.



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A nihilistic line thus connects all parts of the whole. It is Xenia, to quote the famous *Gummo* by Harmony Korine. But this time it is Ser Serpas, together with the artist and friend Rafik Greiss, who holds the camera and at the same time performs to then imprint the creative process on chromogenic prints. Not so much documenting, but constructing a storyboard of an as-yet-unrealized film as the artist herself asserts, and as it is also shown by the series of drawings and notes on Moleskine on the second floor. In the photos, images, people, and objects coexist. The arrangement is free on both floors and on the walls. On the ground floor, there are photographs of the artist gathering and moving pieces of doors, chairs or furniture. A photograph of a rag next to one of a bathtub where the suspense grows for the presence of a figure in the back (the artist) inside. Photographs at the high apex of the wall as well as inside the installation itself.



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On the second floor, there are small black and white photos with performances or assemblies. There are also collages and photos of large-scale installations juxtaposed with four display cases containing personal drawings and notes. Ser Serpas lets us play and enter the still under-construction plot. Ser Serpas expresses herself without restraint. Her versatility conquers all, but there are no limits in her work. She experiments and leaves her film still unfinished. The sense of desolation that unfolds in this exhibit does not leave us without fascination. Her practice, in fact, attracts, unites, and connects. The next act will be at the Bourse de Commerce in Paris in the fall. The artist does not reveal, but hints at another exploit.

Matteo Giovanelli

