

# Laurence Leenaert

Cadogan Contemporary

Exhibition dates: 23rd February - 12th March 2021

Cadogan Contemporary is proud to announce Laurence Leenaert's first UK solo exhibition. Featuring twelve new paintings, the exhibition opens at the South Kensington gallery in February 2021 and is the second ever presentation of her paintings since Cadogan Contemporary's group show, *Invisible Subjects*, a year previous.

Laurence Leenaert believes in the importance of a purely tactile process and aschews the use of digital tools or machine-led interventions in her practice. Building up abstract, three dimensional, mixed media compositions with acrylic paint and elements such as wool yarn and cotton patches expressively composed on rough burlap canvas, Leenaert combines techniques such as weaving and embroidery into her painting practice. Composing intuitively on canvases laid horizontally on the ground, Leenaert moves between tools and materials, pouring paint and making gestural applications of dyed materials to add both colour and line. Each painting then develops slowly over many months, as specific elements are taken away to be woven and embroidered, a distance that the artist embraces as part of her process of reflection, reduction and revision.

*'Having time away from the work as it develops is useful for me.'* she says. *'It allows me to see the work from different perspectives. I embrace accidents and imperfections but I still tend to destroy more work than I make. Mostly because by allowing the paintings time to just 'be' I'll find that an element from one painting actually works better in another.*

Leenaert's paintings are a distillation of her myriad skills and interest in material and natural form. Her almost-naive use of line and unruly geometry, run counterpoint to an intuitive wisdom of how light and form are revealed in nature. These minimal marks made on a heavily textured, maximalist surface have echoes of cave paintings, hieroglyphs and runic inscriptions from ancient worlds. Moving to Morocco in 2015, Leenaert surrounded herself with visual, material and cultural inspiration. Her work began to combine the colour, natural materials and mirage-esque forms that she found on the edge of the desert and within the local communities. Even the interlocking adobe riads and busy architecture of Marrakech, might be seen within the abstract compositions of her new paintings shown at Cadogan Contemporary.

Home, and the importance of the house is the inspiration for these new paintings. This is reflected in the titles Leenaert has chosen, many of which show special significance to her and draw from her personal experience moving to Marrakech.

*"The center of a Moroccan house is the traditional Riad, everything is centered around it and is a place where the family always gathers. But for every person the heart of the house is a different space and there is a need for a specific structure. Everything from clay houses to palaces and the contrast of it, the chaos of the city, the palm trees, the pink walls, the light of the sun. I'm constantly looking for harmony and looking for this important space, translating this into textiles, lines, graphics, relief."*

## **Laurence Leenaert**

It is in Morocco that Leenaert also runs a renowned design studio LRNCE where she creates objects for the home and a range of clothing. As we see in Leenaert's approach to painting, LRNCE designs also reflect her interest in thinking across media and breaking down hierarchies of materials, yet are produced in multiples with a team of artisans, in contrast to her unique paintings that she works on and reworks by hand over many months. LRNCE is lauded by style and design press internationally as one of the brightest, freshest, design houses of the moment but Laurence Leenaert's unique artworks are only recently coming to fore, with the first presentation of her paintings taking place in a group show at Cadogan Contemporary in March 2020.

Now with this first solo presentation at Cadogan Contemporary, 2021 is the year that Laurence Leenaert's name becomes firmly cemented amongst the genre-pushing young artists of the moment, and when she expands her artistic practice even further into new mediums.

## **About The Artist**

Laurence Leenaert was born in Kortrijk, Belgium and studied Fashion at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent, Belgium. After an internship at Bless, Berlin, in 2013 she launched her own design studio, LRNCE, in response to fast fashion and short-lived seasons. Her designs quickly became sought after in high-end outlets such as Conran Shop, Picasso Museum and Le Bon Marche Paris. In 2015 she relocated her studio from Ghent, Belgium to Marrakech, Morocco, where she was able to further develop her practice working with local materials such as wool, clay, leather and wood. Invisible Subjects at Cadogan Contemporary, March 2020, was the artist's first ever presentation of her paintings.