

RONCHINI
KATE BURLING
SOFTNESS AS A TORRENT
~~NOTHING TO SEE HERE~~



Kate Burling, Heave, 2023, oil on canvas, 140 x 140 cm (each)

PREVIEW: TUESDAY, 28/5/2024, 6–8 PM
OPEN: 29/5 – 14/6/2024

Ronchini is proud to host *Softness as a Torrent*, a solo show of artworks by British artist Kate Burling exploring ideas of divinity, symbolism and the ordinary.

What forms are available to us, to take and use as our own? Often the forms which endure in the world are the ones which allow themselves to be reproduced. They are recognised easily, made through signs and gestures which, in their repetition, become ordinary. Drawing a line through the day, numbered on the calendar, at the end of each evening. Making the sign of the cross as you pass the altar of a church. These gestures are available to use, and to use them suggests a faith in their meaning. More than the first part of the question, it is perhaps those last three words, as our own, which trouble.

In *Softness as a Torrent* (2024), Kate Burling uses painting to investigate ideas of force and divinity, exploring through image-making how potency and gentleness might occupy the same space. The paintings receive dimensions and depth through a set of signs: shapes which repeat and differ. A

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smooth, disk-like circle reoccurs most often. Sometimes it is falling, flooding the image in swarms. Elsewhere their softened edges give way to another image: the ovular shape of a bell, the roundness of St. Sebastian's nipple. Sharper forms take shape too, in the tubular arrows of 'Sebastian With Trumpets' (2024), or in a downpour, deflecting off the umbrella's surface in 'Me and You (Air-screw)' (2024).

In this motion of falling, persistently dominating the paintings' space, an above is alluded to. It extends the upper boundary of the image towards unseen planes of the picture. During our conversations about the work, Kate directed me to a line found originally in The Book of the Twenty-four Philosophers, a small pamphlet published in Latin in the 4th century: "God is an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." As directions for a painter, this description asks for formal impossibilities. Any circle, any curved line, drawn from such an instruction would be an approximation, translating the divine into the ordinary. But the statement still grants a possibility of being represented, if only through misrepresentation. It offers itself up to becoming sign, gesture: part of a ritual. Writing about the making of this work, Kate describes the process as devotional. The work began in Umbria at The Residency organised by Ronchini, where outside of the studio she spent time in the nearby town, often in churches, watching people at Mass. Returning to the studio, the process of making became inflected with the texture of liturgy. The same forms were revisited daily, painting not with a brush but with fingers, directly touching the surface of the image. Repetitions began to generate through contact with the immediate, surrounding space. In a diary entry written in the first few weeks there, Kate describes a sculpture, standing in the middle of the field behind the studio, visible through the window of the room she worked in: "a huge tilted ring, made from iron, I think? Its slant makes it look like its fallen from the sky."

"The work isn't the thing, it's an offering to the thing," Kate wrote to me, in an email. She followed this statement with an emoji, the one with the slight grimace and spiralling eyes. I read in it a trace of squeamishness at using a word as vague and undefined as thing. It is in this feeling, however, in that uneasiness surrounding the distance between the thing and the concrete work we do for it, whether that be creative work, or religious work, where a useful uncertainty might turn up. This sense of uncertainty provokes us towards potential forms: ones we might incorporate into our daily practice, into which we might invest the ordinary. It returns to that first question, of how might we find a form to use as our own. The question still troubles, though there is something in it, perhaps, which has to do with intimacy. It is an intimacy found in the work, in the making of what is tangible: of what can be represented and what can be touched, even if only as an offering.

Text by Zuzia O'Donoghue..

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ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Kate Burling (b. 1998) was born in Reading and currently works in South London. She studied at Camberwell College of Arts where she obtained her BA in Fine Art in 2022. Burling's work explores the tension between the ephemerality of life and the certainty of death. In much of her work the artist applies what she describes as a bodily approach to materiality by painting with her fingers and the palms of her hands, thus blurring the distinction between herself and the subject.

EXHIBITION: *Kate Burling: Softness as a Torrent*

DATES: 28 May 2024 – 14 June 2024

OPENING HOURS: Monday – Friday 10am – 6pm, Saturday by appointment

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