

staircase

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San Francisco, CA



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## conclave

Léonie Guyer

September 15 - October 22, 2023

Opening Reception  
Friday, September 15, 2023  
6-9 pm



Léonie Guyer, *Untitled, no. 115*, 2021,  
oil on incised marble, 24 x 12 ½ in.  
Photo by Jenna Garrett, 2023.

San Francisco, CA. September 06, 2023 - staircase is pleased to present *conclave*, an exhibition of work by San Francisco artist Léonie Guyer. This is the fourth exhibition in staircase's inaugural series. *conclave* is accompanied by a limited-edition artist book, essay by Rita Bullwinkel, designed by GRL GRP and Léonie Guyer.

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When I first saw each of the four paintings in *conclave*, I thought immediately that they were pneumaness, that they were created by a body, but revealed a realm where there are no bodies. In the wall painting, the left side of the shape has a limb that is outreaching, extending up and out and then curling over, unfurling up towards the light of the skylight, bending like a plant that changes shape over the course of the day with the shifting light of a rising, then setting sun. It is a small show. And yet, the show feels spacious. The space in which the show exists is a space between spaces, the artery of a building, the staircase within which people, including myself, including my mother, including my grandmother, ferry their bodies to their next dramas, up to their homes, and down out into the hardware store parking lot upon which the staircase delivers the bodies it intakes. The marble painting in *conclave* has the shadow of an action on it, the clear contour of a shape that Guyer made and later erased. And the marble itself has black veins in it. That is what marble-sellers call it—"veins"—as if rocks had life-blood, too.

Something that transfixes me about each of the works in *conclave* is the painted shapes' entanglement with the substances on which they were made. The wall painting on the interior of the skylight feels inextricable from the wall on which it was painted, as if the painting was not exclusively executed by Guyer, a painting painted upon a wall, but a collaboration between Guyer and the wall, the wall an active participant in the painting as it was being made. It's as if the atomic levels at which Guyer paints encourage a cellular level mixing. One of the things that always made sense to me about *pneuma* is that it makes sense that we all come from the same thing. The marble painting in *conclave* looks less like a painting made on marble and more like an extraction of the marble's black veins, a concentration of the force that made the marble have black speckles focused back and funneled into a singular arresting shape. And the red painting, the one that looks red like the red of dried blood, red like the red of blood after it's been pulled, and separated, from an artery, that painting was created on, or with, a 19th century piece of paper from India that is creased in a way that makes it look like someone once thought about, but then abandoned, making a fan. The creases on the paper leave the ghost of a human action.

- By Rita Bullwinkel (excerpt, "Notes on *conclave*")

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### **About the Artist**

Léonie Guyer makes paintings, drawings, site-based work, and books. Her work is characterized by idiosyncratic shapes that are situated in a variety of spaces. Guyer's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts; UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; Bibeau Kreuger, NYC; 2nd Floor Projects / fused space, San Francisco; odium fati, San Francisco; Feature Inc., NYC; Peter Blum Gallery, NYC; Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, WA; Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, Portland, OR; Lumber Room, Portland, OR; The Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon, NY; Gallery Joe, Philadelphia; Mills College Art Museum, Oakland; PLUSkunst, Düsseldorf, Germany and other venues.

She has taught at the San Francisco Art Institute, California College of the Arts, University of California at Berkeley, San José State University, and elsewhere.

### **About the Essay**

Rita Bullwinkel is the author of *Headshot* (Viking 2024) and *Belly Up*, which garnered a 2022 Whiting Award. Bullwinkel's writing has been published in *ZYZZYVA*, *Tin House*, *The White Review*, *Conjunctions*, *BOMB*, *Vice*, *NOON*, and *Guernica*. She is a recipient of grants and fellowships from MacDowell, Brown University, Vanderbilt University, Hawthornden Castle, and The Helene Wurlitzer Foundation. Her work has been translated into Italian, Greek and Dutch. Both her fiction and translation have been nominated for Pushcart Prizes. She is an

Editor at Large for McSweeney's, the Deputy Editor of *The Believer*, a Contributing Editor for *NOON*, and the creator of Oral Florist. She lives in San Francisco and teaches at the California College of the Arts and University of San Francisco.

#### About staircase

staircase is an experimental space from curious collaborators (Lindsay Albert + Ivana Colendich). The inaugural series is born out of the need for more alternative and affordable art spaces in the Bay Area. The project will showcase various art forms and host events centered around the visual arts. Established in 2023, based in San Francisco.

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#### Address

staircase gallery  
148 Clement St  
San Francisco, CA 94118

#### Hours

Opening Reception  
September 15, 2023, 6–9 pm  
Saturday and Sunday open, 12–4 pm

#### Contact

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#### Connect

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