



SERENA CAULFIELD

*Dream Baby Dream*





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Tara Murphy requests the pleasure of your company  
at the private view of

## SERENA CAULFIELD

### Dream Baby Dream

to be opened by

May Kay, singer & broadcaster

on

Thursday 11 January 2024

from 6pm to 8pm

The exhibition continues until Saturday 3 February 2024

Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 10.00am – 5.30pm / Saturday: 11am – 4pm

Artworks may be viewed and acquired in advance at the gallery by appointment, via the Online Viewing Room  
at [www.solomonfineart.ie](http://www.solomonfineart.ie) - or simply scan the QR code below with your smartphone camera for prices and availability.

### Solomon Fine Art

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front cover: *FARAWAY NEARBY II*, oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm

inside cover: *WILD HORSES AT MIDNIGHT, WITHOUT A MOON (detail)*, oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm (see p. 15)



## Don't Ignore Your Longing for the Orange Paintings by Serena Caulfield

*'I won't opt for narrative, which would mean inventing reality instead of searching for it.'*<sup>1</sup>

Serena Caulfield may be considered a figurative painter but she uses figuration to figure out reality more than represent it. Like the French writer, Annie Ernaux, who tests the boundaries between memoir and fiction, Caulfield teases out the edges between the conscious and the unconscious image. Her dense, vibrant paintings strike us with the strangeness of a dream and the certainty of a memory we didn't know we had. In 'Orwell's Roses' (2023), the deep red roses smelled by the girl are clearly not roses, but the dream and the dreamer know they are. In 'The Light That Holds the Hot Sky Tame' (2023), a girl? a princess? is the wrong size to inhabit this woodland idyll, populated by a myriad of earthly creatures, but she holds the reins to a white horse, and so emits an aura of authority that makes the make-believe desirable. Despite the lurid, unnaturally yellow sky, that in a more representative painting would signal climate catastrophe, here we willingly embrace a world of inter-species harmony where apples can grow on whatever tree they want. Recent studies of wild animals found that they scattered more quickly on hearing human conversation than the roar of a lion. In Caulfield's Eden, the animals are guides and the lone girl harmless and fearless in her quest. The non-hierarchical placing of figures asks us to consider the lost 'inter-being' between humans and more-than-humans, and thus gain access to the shared, bright carnival of the everyday. In a world we've pushed to the brink of a sixth mass extinction, Caulfield invites us into an abundant, unthreatening and unthreatened world that can only exist in the imagination or dreams.

I'm reminded of the American poet, CA Conrad's somatic rituals which de-centre the human, in an attempt to revive the spirit and the planet. Caulfield's visions are void of adults and reconnect with that time when we were in touch with imaginary friends and bunnies who could talk. In 'Savage Dreams' (2023), two children glide on horseback through water, with a dusk-lit farmhouse in the distance. One is dressed as an Indian chief – the 'savage' of the title, or is it the savage colonialists who decimated the indigenous Americans and brought misrule and famine to Ireland? For many of us, there was more vivid freedom in the persona of the squaw, than the cowboy. The tower, like the dilapidated arches in 'In the Ruins of Memory' (2023), stands as an echo of the island's ancient kings and battles for conquest. Monstrous forms, with hinted blue eyes, lurk in the dark, indistinct clumps of trees in 'Savage Dreams'. These moody densities recall the work of Franz Marc, one of the founding members of the German Blue Rider group,

who was to die in WW1. The innocence of childhood, that can often only be experienced later in art, conjured so powerfully in Caulfield's work, is echoed by the censored Romanian poet, Nina Cassian:

*'Don't stir up purple. Leave some mystery  
intact and undisturbed. But don't ignore  
your longing for the orange of lighted windows  
that shine beside your childhood door.'*<sup>2</sup>

Caulfield's paintings both invoke myth and invent it. Whether it's Morrigan, the Raven Goddess, or the goddess-mare, Macha, these symbols shift between war-like virility and feminine fecundity. We sense that despite the raven's warnings in 'The Raven and the Rainbow' (2023), this girl-seeker will continue to quest with her back to the rainbow and the impossibly blue sea. She embodies the bold naivety of the fairy tale protagonist who enters the wood as night falls. To individuate, she must renounce sentimental, seductively enhanced 'nature' and also the naturalism of the Irish landscape tradition. To that end, in many paintings, the landscape disintegrates into intense patches of abstract gestures, becoming splotchy or sinuous, with a complexity that is at once alluring and invigorating. In these under or over stories, the still-wild landscape of an older age is suggested, with the uncultivated patterns we must learn again to discern.

Horses recur in 'Wild Horses at Midnight without the Moon' (2023), where a herd of white and of pink horses appear both in and up in the trees. The stark simplicity reads like a record of a dream and recalls Freud's patient, Sergei Pankejeff's drawing of white wolves in a tree outside his bedroom window. If analysis can unlock the latent thoughts in a dream, can painting also unravel this latency? Like white and pink sugared almonds, the horses evince smooth, uncomplicated sweetness. Left to their own symbolic framework, they graze, at one with each other and the woodland.

In this new work, Caulfield delivers a fresh, dynamic lexicon for contemporary painting that employs colour saturation to defamiliarize the landscape, nimble figuration and moments of luscious abstraction to create and recreate territories of myth, dream and imagination. We become the lost visitor following her path through the woods.

Cherry Smyth  
December 2023

<sup>1</sup> Annie Ernaux, *Shame*, London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 1997, p.28    <sup>2</sup> Nina Cassian, *Life Sentence*, London: Anvil Press, 1990

FARAWAY NEARBY II  
2022/23  
oil on canvas  
50 x 70 cm





THERE'S ANOTHER SKY  
2022  
oil on canvas  
120 x 150 cm





HORSE FRIGHTENED BY A PAINTED LANDSCAPE  
2022  
oil on canvas  
80 x 60 cm



HOPE IN THE DARK  
2022  
oil on wooden panel  
50 x 60 cm





ORWELL'S ROSES  
2023  
oil on canvas  
40 x 50 cm



WILD HORSES AT MIDNIGHT, WITHOUT A MOON

2023

oil on canvas

80 x 60 cm





THE LIGHT THAT HOLDS THE HOT SKY TAME

2023

oil on canvas

80 x 100 cm



DREAM BABY DREAM  
2023  
oil on canvas  
50 x 70 cm





WHISPERS TO A NIGHT SKY

2021

oil on canvas

50 x 40 cm



SAVAGE DREAMS

2023

oil on canvas

50 x 70 cm





MAGIC MARKERS  
2023  
oil on canvas  
40 x 50 cm



# SERENA CAULFIELD

(b. 1985)

Serena Caulfield is an artist who makes paintings. Memories morph into tall tales. Invented imagery invites novel narratives. Transforming old to new, past to present, absence to presence, here to there, she likes to paint quickly and think slowly.

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 *The Blue of Distance*, Art Seen, Nicosia, Cyprus (forthcoming)
- 2024 *Dream Baby Dream*, Solomon Fine Art, Dublin  
*The Remnants & The Ruins*, Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny (forthcoming)
- 2023 *Con\verge*, Garter Lane Arts Centre, Waterford  
*Convergences*, Ballina Arts Centre, Co. Mayo  
*Not somewhere else but here*, Wexford Arts Centre
- 2021 *Flex-ions*, Luan Gallery, Athlone  
*Exits & Entrances*, National Opera House, Wexford
- 2018 *Fragments*, Wexford Festival Opera at VINE, Wexford  
*Coastlines*, Write by the Sea Festival, Kilmore Quay
- 2015 *A Field Guide To Getting Lost*, Tate Guerin Gallery, Gorey
- 2014 *Root of An Unfocus*, The Berkeley Gallery, Thomastown  
*Second Home by The Sea*, Galerie 3F, Paris
- 2013 *Misfits*, The Banqueting Hall Gallery, Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin
- 2012 *Misfits*, Studio Nine, Wexford

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Winter Group Exhibition*, Solomon Fine Art, Dublin
- 2022 *Winter Print Show*, Hang Tough Contemporary, Dublin  
*WIDE OPEN SPACE*, Wexford County Council Buildings, Wexford



- 2022 *BEEP Painting Prize*, Elysium Gallery, Swansea, Wales  
*Zurich Portrait Prize*, Crawford Art Gallery, Cork  
*GENERATION 2022: New Irish Painting*, Butler Gallery, Kilkenny
- 2021 *Zurich Portrait Prize*, National Gallery of Ireland  
*140th RUA Annual Exhibition*, Royal Ulster Academy, Belfast  
*Crossings at King House*, Boyle Arts Festival  
*MEET @ Periphery Space*, Gorey School of Art  
*In Absentia*, Turps School Correspondence Course Group Show, Shrine Gallery, New York (online)
- 2020 *Courthouse Winter Open*, Courthouse Gallery, Ennistymon, Co. Clare
- 2019 *ARTFORM Contemporary 2019*, The Quay, Waterford  
*Painters* (two person show with Hanneke Van Ryswyk), Wexford Arts Festival
- 2017 *Peripheries OPEN*, Michael Warren Gallery, Gorey School of Art  
*And Creatures Dream... A New Language*, Wexford Arts Centre and County Hall
- 2013 *We Want You*, Avenue Road Gallery, Dublin
- 2010 *Does My Art Look Big In This?*, St. Margaret's Church, Norwich  
*Dividing Lines*, STEW Space, Norwich
- 2009 *MAFA Degree Show*, Norwich University of the Arts  
*Invasion, Occupation, Transformation*, East Gallery, Norwich

#### RESIDENCIES

- 2021, 2019 Tyrone Guthrie Centre, Annaghmakerrig, Newbliss, Co. Monaghan  
 2016 Cill Rialaig, Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry

#### PUBLICATIONS

- 2023 Paper Visual Art Journal, vol. 15  
 2022 VAN Painting Special Issue  
 2020 Wexford People, 'Art in the Age of Covid' column  
 2010 A-N Magazine, July/August Issue

## EDUCATION / PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 2021-22 MAKE/CURATE supported by Wexford Arts Centre and Wexford Co. Council
- 2020-21 PeripheriesMEET, Mentoring Programme, Gorey School of Art
- 2019-20 Turps Correspondence Course, Offsite Programme
- 2009 MA Fine Art (Distinction), Norwich University of the Arts
- 2007 BA Fine Art (Hons), Wexford Campus School of Art and Design
- 2006 BA Fine Art, Gorey School of Art

## AWARDS

- 2022 Hang Tough OPEN CALL, solo exhibition winner  
Platform 31 Artist Bursary  
The Arts Council of Ireland Agility Award  
Artlinks Visual Arts Bursary  
Jacksons Painting Prize (Longlist)
- 2021 The Arts Council of Ireland Visual Arts Bursary  
The Arts Council of Ireland Agility Award  
Artlinks Visual Arts Bursary
- 2020 Arts Council Professional Development Award  
Artlinks Visual Arts Bursary  
Tyrone Guthrie Award (Wexford Arts Office)
- 2008 Wexford County Council Education/Training Award

## COLLECTIONS

- Arts Council of Ireland
- Wexford County Council
- Kelly's Hotel Art Collection, Rosslare
- Ice House Hotel, Ballina, Co. Mayo
- Numerous private collections throughout Ireland, UK, Europe & USA

# SERENA CAULFIELD: *Dream Baby Dream*

11 January - 3 February 2024

SC005	There's Another Sky	2022	oil on canvas	120 x 150 cm
SC014	The Light That Holds the Hot Sky Tame	2023	oil on canvas	80 x 100 cm
SC010	Horse Frightened by a Painted Landscape	2022	oil on canvas	80 x 60 cm
SC013	Horses at Midnight, Without a Moon	2023	oil on canvas	80 x 60 cm
SC008	Dream Baby Dream	2023	oil on canvas	50 x 70 cm
SC016	Faraway Nearby II	2022/3	oil on canvas	50 x 70 cm
SC018	Savage Dreams	2023	oil on canvas	50 x 70 cm
SC011	Hope in the Dark	2022	oil on wooden panel	50 x 60 cm
SC009	Magic Markers	2023	oil on canvas	40 x 50 cm
SC012	Orwell's Roses	2023	oil on canvas	40 x 50 cm
SC017	Whispers to a Night Sky	2021	oil on canvas	50 x 40 cm

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back cover: *DREAM BABY DREAM*, 2023, oil on canvas, 50 x 70 cm



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