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Contemporary Art  
Museum St. Louis

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Shara Hughes first major solo museum exhibition in US  
features more than thirty paintings from 2015–21**



Shara Hughes, *Naked Lady*, 2019. Oil and dye on canvas, 78 x 66 inches. Private Collection, Dallas. Courtesy the artist; Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich; and Pilar Corrias, London.

**August 18, 2021 (St. Louis, MO)** - The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (CAM) presents the first major solo museum exhibition of Shara Hughes in the United States, featuring work from the past seven years, including more than thirty paintings, drawings, and prints. Hughes is often referred to as a landscape painter, but from the artist's point of view, her paintings "are not really about landscapes" at all. The artist loosely gives form to floating moons, gnarled trees, and blazing sunlight, bridging the abstract and representational. The paintings contain psychological complexity bringing to life a world that is elegantly chaotic—infused with a vibrant harmony of the organic, the objective, and the surreal. At human scale—the size of her own "wingspan"—many of the works are immersive, inviting and alarming, beautiful and scary. *Shara Hughes: On Edge* offers an overview of her unworldly scenes, September 3, 2021 through February 13, 2022.

Hughes's wildly colorful paintings are not depictions of places, real or imagined. The work fits within a historical tradition of painting that includes the early Modernism of Matisse's Fauvist landscapes or the patterns found in Gustav Klimt's plein-air paintings. These references may serve as a point of departure for Hughes, but her paintings maintain a unique personal vision within truly compelling and singular

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10–5 Thu  
10–8 Fri  
10–5 Sat & Sun

**CAM is free. Visit often!**

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compositions. Employing a variety of mark-making techniques, Hughes places her emphasis on gesture, symbolism, and iconography.

Hughes is an intuitive painter, she does not plan, sketch, or premix her color palette. All the works begin abstractly. Hughes dyes, spray paints, and applies color directly to the unprimed canvas. Her painting process is one of immediacy and instinct, balancing control and resigning to the unknown. She sets her own parameters, then lets the paintings inform her, establishing an individual relationship with each one.

The paintings are of human scale, offering the viewer an immersive and physical connection with the compositions. Many of the paintings employ framing devices that engage with the edges of the canvas, creating portals or entryways into the works. "I like for you to be able to totally believe in the painting but then know that it stops at the edges.... I like being able to have that kind of back and forth of yes and no."

Hughes recently expanded her practice into printmaking. CAM presents a selection of her monoprints. These are unique single images, like paintings made directly on the plate and transferred through the press onto a piece of paper. Monoprinting demands that the work is executed quickly, which compels Hughes to be more selective and decisive about color and gesture. Also on view are monoprint drawings, made through a process that involves the making of a monoprint, then running another sheet through the press, which catches only the diluted ghost of the original painted image. She then draws on top of the ghost print, creating a literal déjà vu of the initial image. Hughes's shift to printmaking has informed her painting practice, encouraging her to both cede elements of control even as she commits more strongly to her vision.

The exhibition is generously supported by Anne and Joel Ehrenkranz, Dawn and David Lenhardt, Fern and Lenard Tessler, James and Caitlynde Langer, Cathy and Jonathan Miller, Carole Server and Oliver Frankel, and Cindy and Howard Rachofsky. Special thanks to Rachel Uffner Gallery.

*Shara Hughes: On Edge* is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Chief Curator, and Misa Jeffereis, Assistant Curator.

**Shara Hughes** (b. 1981, Atlanta) most recently presented solo exhibitions at Le Consortium, Dijon, France; The Garden Museum, London; Newport Art Museum, Rhode Island; Gallery Met at the Metropolitan Opera, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta; among others. Forthcoming solo exhibitions include the Aspen Art Museum, Aspen Colorado, and Yuz Museum, Shanghai, in 2021; and the Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland, in 2022. Hughes has participated in numerous group exhibitions, at venues such as the Drawing Center, New York; MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts; and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. Hughes's work belongs to many prominent museum collections including the Dallas Museum of Art; Denver Art Museum; Jorge M. Perez Collection, Miami; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; M Woods Museum, Beijing; Phoenix Art Museum; Rachofsky Collection, Dallas; Saint Louis Art Museum; Si Shang Art Museum, Beijing; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Yuz Museum, among others. Hughes earned a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design and later attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She currently lives and works in Brooklyn.

## Related Events

### Friday, September 3

Patron Preview 10:00–11:30 am  
Member Preview 5:00–6:00 pm  
Public Opening 6:00–9:00 pm  
For press access on Opening Day  
RSVP to Eddie Silva at 314.387.0405  
or [esilva@camstl.org](mailto:esilva@camstl.org)

### Wednesday, October 13, 6:00 pm

Artist Talk

### Saturday, January 29, 11:00 am–5:00 pm

Workshop: Crafting Connectings  
with Missouri Botanical Garden



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**About the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis**

The Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis works to enrich lives and inspire curiosity, creativity, and learning through experiences with contemporary art. Focused on a dynamic array of changing exhibitions, the Museum reflects and contributes to the global cultural landscape while engaging thousands of visitors through a wide array of public programs. CAM nurtures the creative minds of our city's youth through free, in-depth art education, making a long-lasting impact on the community. We are a site for discovery, a welcoming space, free and open to all.

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