

Press release

Sequoia Scavullo | *Phat Theft, Blue*

28.02.-09.05.2026

Opening: Saturday, 28 February, 2026, 12 - 3 pm

carlier | gebauer, Madrid, is pleased to announce *Phat Theft, Blue*, Sequoia Scavullo's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The show brings together a selection of newly produced paintings in various formats, condensing some of the most persistent lines of her recent practice: a deeply sensory investigation into the transfiguration of energy, sacrifice, and intermediary states between body, dream, and landscape.

Sequoia Scavullo's painting is intensely anchored in the sensory. Rather than organising themselves around recognisable images or motifs, her works construct dense, enveloping atmospheres in which colour, texture, and layered surfaces activate a bodily experience of looking. This emphasis on the senses is not merely an aesthetic choice, but the result of an early and conflicted relationship with normative forms of language. Dyslexic from childhood, Scavullo grew up in a context where verbal and written learning were associated with criteria of efficiency and correctness. Language ceased to function as a means of translating the world and instead became a site of frustration and exclusion.

From this necessity emerges her interest in non-verbal systems of signs and in an understanding of knowledge as an integrated sensory experience: non-linear, embodied, intuitive, grounded in perception and direct experience. Painting thus becomes a process of translation that does not fix meanings but opens up states. In several works, a floating alphabet appears, composed of invented symbols that do not refer to words but to perceptions: forms inscribed on surfaces that evoke parchments or sandstone emerging from amber-coloured liquids, where grains and intertwined hands drift. Unlike Hildegard von Bingen's *Lingua Ignota*, this system does not seek to name the world, but to articulate a perceptual grammar in which multiple senses coexist.

Formally, most of the works in this exhibition unfold in vertical compositions. The colour blue predominates—a deep blue, at times milky, at times nocturnal—accompanied by pinkish, creamy, reddish, and orange tones that seem to emerge from or dissolve into the surface. Painting is an act accompanied by memories and sensory experiences. Scavullo refers to various tactile reminiscences, such as the texture of cottonwood in spring: white fibres floating through the air, soft and spongy, almost unreal, until they brush against the skin and cling to the body, causing a kind of a mess. For her, beginning a painting involves first passing through a state of comfort and pleasure, before entering a disturbance that does not leave her until the work is finished.

Many of her compositions allude to personal stories or dreamlike scenes that transform into a dense, fluid material—sensual and ambivalent, in perpetual motion. The fleeting sensation of recognising a pattern that inevitably shifts and deviates—surprising her beyond all expectation—finds a precise image in a memory: the tabby pattern she used to stroke on the forehead of her cat Opal, which over time transformed into a kind of mutable labyrinth. The motif of the cave also recurs, as a space of containment and emotional circulation, but also as a metaphor for the subconscious, for a prenatal or post-mortem state in which past and present, life and death, the human and the non-human interconnect. For Scavullo, dreaming is not a withdrawal from the world but a way of accessing it. Dreams function as spaces of communication with non-human forces, with ancestors, with that which does not manifest on the visible plane but actively intervenes in everyday life. This approach is linked to the Taíno roots of her paternal family and to a recovery of non-Western epistemological modes, in which knowledge is not organised through binary or hierarchical terms, but as a continuous weave between body, dream, environment, and memory, including the existence of parallel and inverted worlds.

In our conversations, Scavullo tells me that lately she rubs her neck with nard essential oil before working. It is not an immediate fragrance: it slowly settles into the air, dense,

out of herself, momentarily dissolving the ego and suspending the need for control. Historically associated with anointing rituals and preparations for death—according to tradition, it was the oil with which Mary anointed Christ’s body before the crucifixion—nard introduces a sacrificial dimension not based on violence or extraction, but on care. It accompanies a body that is about to be lost; it intensifies presence before disappearance.

From this dimension emerge her reflections on sacrifice. Historically, sacrifice has fallen upon bodies considered closer to a vital source: the lamb, the woman, the child. Not because of their power, but because of their vulnerability; not because of their strength, but because of their presumed proximity to the sacred. In Scavullo’s work, this logic is put under tension through a persistent attention to the Etruscan liver, a ritual object used for divination. In the practice of haruspicy, the organ of a sacrificed animal was read as a map capable of revealing divine will: a soft, visceral topography in which what happens below reflects what occurs above. In her paintings, these hepatic forms appear repeated and suspended, stripped of their instrumental function. They are no longer remnants of a completed sacrifice, but floating signs. The question that cuts through this gesture is radical: why does knowledge require a wound? Why can the animal not be the prophet? Why must access to vital energy pass through the destruction of another body?

Alongside this Western genealogy of sacrifice, Scavullo also engages with studies of the Aztec world, which allow her to think through these practices from another position. In the Aztec ontology described by Koziar and Kerkhove, the cosmos is neither stable nor guaranteed: the gods age, the sun may be extinguished, and life persists only if energy continues to circulate. Sacrifice does not appear here as punishment or expiation, but as an act of extreme restitution: transforming death into movement, turning a body into a threshold between worlds, sustaining an always-precarious balance. This conception resonates in Scavullo’s work not as a model to be replicated, but as a fissure through which to rethink economies of offering, debt, and transformation. She extends this reflection to victim-abuser dynamics, which she presents not as a closed moral opposition, but as a learned system of circulation and diversion of energy, embedded within social, political, and economic structures that normalise domination and often turn it into virtue. The wound does not emerge in a vacuum; it is produced within a context that legitimises it.

In this sense, Scavullo’s work asks what happens to the energy broken by violence—in bodies, in relationships, in collective conflicts—and how it might be transformed. Painting does not offer a resolution, but rather a displacement: the possibility that awareness of these dynamics might interrupt their repetition and allow other modes of circulation to be imagined—less extractive, more attentive to the fragility of what one is trying to sustain.

From there, her paintings function as spaces of passage, where the senses recover their agency, non-verbal communication unfolds its potential, and experience remains open. In that soft, misty territory, painting sacrifices nothing: it does not extract, consume, or close off. It simply allows something to remain alive.

Text by Cristina Anglada, independent curator

Sequoia Scavullo (b. 1995, Baltimore) lives and works in Paris. She studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris with Mimosa Echard. Scavullo is the winner of the 2025 Matsutani Prize.