

Kate Mosher Hall at Hannah Hoffman

March 31, 2021
Text by Allison Nicole Conner



Kate Mosher Hall, *Yellow Dust*
(2021). Acrylic and charcoal on
canvas, 82 x 84 inches. Image
courtesy of the artist and
Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles.
Photo: Paul Salveson.

I couldn't tell if I was looking at a photographic negative or an assemblage of dreams. *Yellow Dust* (2021), an acrylic and charcoal painting by Kate Mosher Hall, depicts a nighttime scene—a wolf caught mid-slink as it crosses an ochre-tinted landscape. Though its face is a blurry smudge, the animal appears mesmerized by something beyond the canvas. An off-kilter pale yellow square frames the wolf's upper body like a ghostly spotlight. Stepping back, I noticed the repetition of that yellowish brightness, and the way it either cuts parts of the scenery into smaller screens or hovers

Contemporary Art Review, March 2021

Tanya Leighton

near the bottom of the canvas like intrusive searchlights. Inky shadows obscure the specifics of time and place, stranding the wolf in a twilight realm. Are those cliffs? Is that a street sign? I jumped, startled by a corpse-like shadow near the bottom left corner. These ambiguities in Hall's paintings go beyond optical illusion. Her work is deeply concerned with the spiritual conditions of looking, and how it can expand and limit our sense of reality.

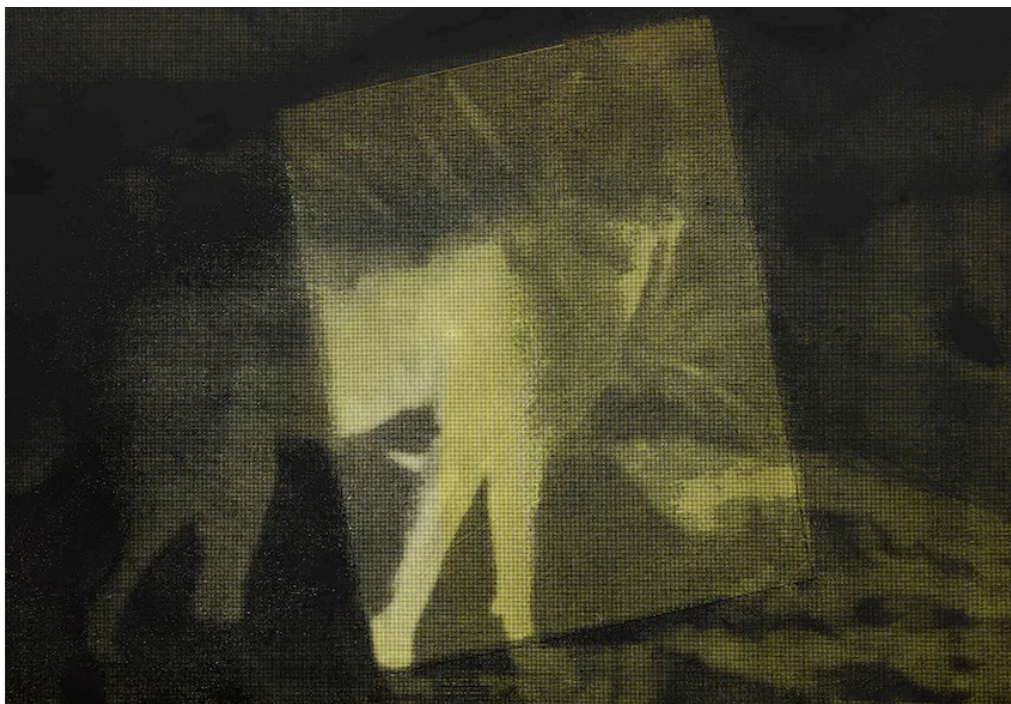
The nine paintings in *Without a body, without Bill*, Hall's new solo exhibition at Hannah Hoffman, present out-of-focus scenes that splice together the sublime and the weird, where memories seem to have been partially swallowed by delirious hallucinations. While meandering the sunlit gallery and peering into each composition, I saw disembodied legs, phantasmal silhouettes, and a detached spinal column slithering like a worm, though figures and locations were generally hard to make out under Mosher's dense distortions of shadow and light. Whenever I settled on a plausible interpretation of what I was looking at (a baby doll, rows of trees), an odd shape would materialize from the background, destabilizing my sense of reality. Animals dissolved into human forms as invisible figures took center stage. *Freeway* (2020) portrays another moving animal, this time a coyote sprinting across a barren road. Here, instead of yellow light, an ashen periwinkle hue creates the floodlight effect. The illuminated coyote and the misshapen apparitions floating around it are given equal attention, erasing clear distinctions between subject and setting.

Reminiscent of works by film director Guy Maddin, Hall creates surreal tableaux whose aesthetics borrow indiscriminately from vaudeville, silent films, magic shows, German Expressionism, and more. *While Moving Between Worlds* (2021) shows two performers whose upper bodies have been replaced by white boxes. Situated inside the boxes is a cropped image of two greyhound-like dogs. The legs tap on a stage framed by a fence that dissolves into a curtain. The crash of styles and moods conjure the associative textures of our inner worlds.

Hall complicates the act of looking by questioning, as Nicole-Antonia Spagnola writes in the press release, why the look commands "such procedural power." This power often disappears whatever falls outside its carefully-defined borders. Instead, Hall depicts the disappeared elements, draining her bodies of solid forms in favor of shapelessness. Shorn of the boundaries that keep us in opposition to the elements beyond our perspectives, the paintings imagine a gaze attuned to our metaphysical bonds.

Kate Mosher Hall: Without a body, without bill runs from February 20–April 10, 2021 at Hannah Hoffman Gallery (2504 W. 7th St., 2nd floor, Los Angeles, CA 90057).

Tanya Leighton



(detail) (2021). Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 82 x 84 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salveson.



Kate Mosher Hall, *Without a body, without Bill* (installation view) (2021). Image courtesy of the artist and Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salveson.

Kurfürstenstraße 156, 10785 Berlin

+49 (0)30 21 972 220, info@tanyaleighton.com, www.tanyaleighton.com

Tanya Leighton



Kate Mosher Hall, *Freeway* (2020). Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 62 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salveson.



Kate Mosher Hall, *While Moving Between Worlds* (installation view) (2021). Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 72 x 80 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Hannah Hoffman, Los Angeles. Photo: Paul Salveson.

Kurfürstenstraße 156, 10785 Berlin

+49 (0)30 21 972 220, info@tanyaleighton.com, www.tanyaleighton.com