

Christine Streuli

Upscape

August 30 – October 18, 2025

Opening: Friday, August 29, 6pm – 8pm

Zahnradstrasse 21, 8005 Zurich

Artist Talk with art historian Maja Wismer: October 1, 6.30 – 8pm

With *Upscape* Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to present the first solo exhibition by Christine Streuli (*1975 in Bern, Switzerland; lives and works in Berlin) at the gallery. The exhibition title *Upscape* is a neologism, a fusion of the words 'up' and 'scape'. *Scape* refers to landscape, backdrop, image, space, and worldview. The adverb or interjection *up* is directional, pointing upwards or indicating a call to rise, an exclamatory impulse to ascend. *Upscape* unfolds through new paintings in large, medium, and small formats, works on paper, and a wallpaper which speak of energies, attraction, ecstasy, beauty and simultaneously gesture towards dystopias, destruction, and despair.

"How can I, as an artist in the year 2025, still engage in the practice of landscape painting?" This question, posed by Christine Streuli, forms the conceptual foundation of the exhibition. The works on view interrogate the notion of landscape and the environment, attempting through painterly means to depict what surrounds us as living beings and how this environment is continuously shifting. How can painting, as a medium, represent human- and nature-induced situations and influences—the complex interweaving and layering of plant life, air, water, earth, and energy? In seeking to respond to these fundamental questions, the artist merges concrete symbols, signs and drawings from abstract painting, thereby opening the field of interpretation: a brushstroke becomes a wave, a blot transforms into a globe, a circle suggests the moon, and a color gradient evokes a sunset.

The exhibition opens with the body of work *Unpainting*—nine small-format, almost monochromatic paintings (each 75 x 56 cm), mounted on wallpaper covering the first two gallery walls. A hue of soft pink and lilac flows from the lower edge of the canvas upwards, gradually fading into an eggshell white. The paintings are characterized by their multilayered nature; the individual motifs become visible particularly through the structure of the layered paint. In *Unpainting_02*, for example, a pattern reminiscent of dripping paint transitions into one that mimics brushstrokes—or waves?—and from this, organic ornaments, foliage, floral motifs, branches, and a fence-like structure emerge. In *Unpainting_08*, a wavy pattern evokes a flowing river, and a sun appears to shine from the upper edge of the painting. Christine Streuli employs stencils for her patterns and motifs, while the color gradients are applied using a spray gun. These gentle, subtle works are placed against wallpaper in bold, vibrant hues: feather-like, rainbow-colored structures arranged radially, alongside shattered crystalline formations. The wallpapers depict polar microscopic images of the hormone testosterone. This juxtaposition introduces one of the exhibition's central thematic layers: the exploration of oppositions. The term testosterone itself is connoted with contradictory associations, representing strength, musculature, heightened libido, courage, power, risk-taking, assertiveness, violence, war, sexism, aggression, and greed.

On the other two walls of the first room, a series of medium- and large-format paintings is displayed, rendered in eclectic colors and partially echoing the motifs found in the smaller works. Desert landscapes, sunsets, globes, fractured terrains, and icy sceneries from which plant-like forms emerge can be discerned. These are dystopian landscapes that suggest a world on the brink of implosion or explosion, yet they remain aesthetically captivating and alluring. Compared to the vivid wallpaper behind the nearly monochromatic paintings, the presentation of these powerful, richly colored canvases on the gallery's white walls creates an inversion. In *Sonnenfinsternis_01* (*Solar eclipse_01*, 160 x 140 cm), a white sun is visible against a black background that appears to be dissolving. The sky has darkened—evoking the brief moment of a solar eclipse. Jellyfish-like, flowing black forms hover above a geometric backdrop composed of saturated purple, yellow, and green triangular shapes, partially obscuring them. The same ornament, however, rendered in butter yellow, turquoise, pink, and dark blue, moves from the upper left edge of the canvas downward.

Another work in this space, *Daily_news_03* (250 x 170 cm), painted in a cool palette of midnight black, blue, turquoise, and white tones, reveals a globe on a characteristic triangular-patterned background. Winds in the form of brushstrokes swirl around it, while shattering triangles transform into icebergs. Dripping blue paint recalls melting ice turning into glacial water.

This series continues into the second exhibition room. As is characteristic of Christine Streuli's practice, these works are constructed through multiple layers of paint, diverse painting techniques, and stenciled motifs. In *Scape_Desert_01* (250 x 200 cm), for example, a sunset-inspired color palette draws the viewer in, evoking the memory of a warm summer's day. Pale pink meets rich tones of pink, red, and orange. Wave-like patterns at the bottom of the canvas suggest sand dunes, reappearing as fine black lines that travel up to the center of the composition. *Saurer Regen (Acid rain)*, 250 x 200 cm) is a composition in predominantly violet, dark red, and pink hues. The sun is setting, mist is rising, and lush plants cluster idyllically near the water's edge—yet a looming threat emerges in the dark violet clouds that rise ominously.

The vibrant testosterone motif—seen through polarised light microscopy—reappears in the third room in the series *Testo* (each 72 x 57 cm, framed), bringing the exhibition to a close. These works on paper are depicting geometric and abstract patterns and are framed using the same inkjet-printed image of testosterone, functioning as a sort of passe-partout. Streuli selected the specific cut-outs of the works on paper based on where they most naturally aligned with the testosterone image. As a result, these cut-outs are never centered and always appear in different locations: color and structure meet their counterparts in color and structure.

With *Upscape*, Christine Streuli invites viewers into a cosmos of tones infused with opposites. She encourages reflection on our environment and the landscapes shaped by human intervention, subtly pointing to destruction and ecological catastrophe—yet without letting us forget the beauty that persists in the world.

About the artist: Christine Streuli is renowned for her "all-over" paintings — large-scale, color-intensive, geometric, and ornamental works that often extend onto the walls of the exhibition space itself. The artist has held solo exhibitions at institutions such as the Kunstmuseum Thun (2020), Museum Folkwang in Essen (2017), Kunstmuseum Luzern (2013), Oldenburger Kunstverein (2009), Aargauer Kunsthaus (2008), Kunsthaus Langenthal (2007), and Kunsthalle Zürich (2005). Her works are represented in numerous public collections, including the Aargauer Kunsthaus; Berlinische Galerie; Berner Kantonalbank; Ricola Collection; Haus Konstruktiv; Helvetia Insurance; Julius Bär Collection; Kunsthaus Zürich; Kunstmuseum Bern; Kunstmuseum Luzern; Kunstmuseum Thun; MASILugano; Museum Folkwang; Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf; Museum zu Allerheiligen; the Canton of Zurich Collection; the City of Zurich Collection; UBS Art Collection; and the Zurich Cantonal Bank Collection. In 2008 and again in 2023, Streuli presented major works at Art Unlimited Art Basel. In the framework of the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007) the artist could exhibit her work *Colour Distance* in the Swiss Pavilion. Since 2015, she has held a professorship at the Berlin University of the Arts (Universität der Künste Berlin, UdK).

About the gallery: Galerie Peter Kilchmann was founded in 1992 by Peter Kilchmann in the emerging Zurich-West district. Between 1996 and 2010, it evolved into an internationally renowned gallery representing artists from Switzerland and the United States, as well as various European and Latin American countries. The gallery gained recognition for exhibitions that challenge established narratives and highlighting critical, non-Western perspectives. In 2011, the gallery moved to larger premises at Zahnradstrasse 21 in the Maag district of Zurich-West. Continuing its expansion in 2021, the gallery opened a second location at Rämistrasse 33 near the Kunsthaus Zurich in the heart of Zurich. The most recent milestone in the gallery's ongoing growth was the inauguration of a branch in the Parisian district of Le Marais in October 2022.

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