

VANESSA SAFAVI METAPHORS FOR GRAVITY

4 September – 15 November 2025

Opening 18 September at 6 pm

In his book *Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science*, art historian Georges Didi-Huberman explores the way images build our knowledge. Inspired by Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, he describes a device in which images do not follow a linear narrative but enter a dialogue through montage: constellations of ideas and flashes of memory, scholarly knowledge and passionate gestures. At the heart of this thinking lies a fundamental tension: the sidereal and the visceral. On one side, the astral — that which elevates, an organized knowledge tracing constellations in the sky. On the other, the visceral — that which unsettles, which is born of the body, from the gut, of wounds and impulses. Rather than opposing these two dimensions, Didi-Huberman lets them converse, showing that true knowledge is always anxious, possessed as much by suffering as by creative drive.



Vanessa Safavi, *Mesmerizing Disco Faces*, 2025,
silicone, pigments and glitter, 50 x 42 cm.

It is precisely within this tension that *Metaphors for Gravity* takes shape. Its sculptural works oscillate between two poles: the pursuit of pure forms, similar to a cosmic order, and the irruption of the body, with its fragility, its wounds, its materiality. In *Dans sa coquille* and *Mounts & Caves*, 2025, the bronze carries this double vibration: that of being eternal, while reminding us of the heaviness of the world and the hardness of the flesh. Safavi's unprecedented series *Galaxy Paintings*, large-scale works representing fragments of starry skies, plunges the gaze into the infinity of the heavens. These wide formats, inhabited by stellar fragments, open up a space where the eye loses itself as in an endless night. The works are not merely cosmic landscapes: they connect to what Georges Didi-Huberman calls the "Astra", constellations of ideas and forms that bring meaning to the chaos of the world.

In these works, the infinite becomes close. The stars become pigment and matter, a vibrant surface. It is an experience both cosmic and intimate at once: to contemplate the sky is always to question one's own place, to search for an inner resonance in the stars' radiance. With the *Galaxy Paintings*, Vanessa Safavi composes a sensitive atlas: a poetic map where imagination meets thinking, where the unknown cosmos is anchored in human experience.

The smaller works from the *Pour Paintings* series, where colors pour and swirl into shiny patterns that seem fluid even after having completely dried, expand this exploration. Safavi's unique style and judicious use of color allow her to probe the physical texture of silicone, thus creating a sense of gravity. Like the heaviness of her bronzes — feminine and generous — the *Pour Paintings* create a visceral atmosphere, where countless layers melt into a heterogeneous surface.

The exhibition *Metaphors for Gravity* becomes a sensitive atlas: a space where sidereal beauty meets visceral intensity, where each piece testifies to the possibility of thinking through forms and materials as much as through words. As with Didi-Huberman, it is not a matter of choosing between order and chaos, but of holding them together, to open a field of knowledge that builds on experience, emotion, and the gaze.

BIOGRAPHY

Vanessa Safavi (b. 1980) lives and works between Berlin (DE) and Fribourg (CH). She holds a visual arts degree from the École cantonale d'art de Lausanne (ECAL) and a Master's degree from the Geneva University of Art and Design (HEAD) in Switzerland. A number of artist residencies have shaped her practice, taking her from Paris to Cape Town, from Johannesburg to New York, from Peru to Heiligenberg and to Rome in 2021. Since the 2010s, Vanessa Safavi has received critical recognition both in Switzerland and internationally. Her works have been shown at Kunsthaus Glarus in Glaris (2011) for her first major solo exhibition, followed by solo shows in Altkirch, Paris and Basel (2012), São Paulo (2014), Bentheim (2016) and Fribourg (2019). She has been nominated for the 2025 Swiss Art Awards and has won the Irène Raymond Prize in 2019 and the Illy Prize in 2012.

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