

**Tiffanie Delune**

***The Geography of Feelings***

**3<sup>rd</sup> October – 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024, Gallery 1957 London**



*'How Strong is Your Spine?'* 2024, 180 x 150 cm, Mixed media on cotton canvas.  
Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957.

French Belgo-Congolese artist Tiffanie Delune (b.1988) debuts her first exhibition at Gallery 1957 London, presenting new paintings and textiles entitled *The Geography of Feelings*. Accompanied by a specially commissioned text by Jennifer Higgin who visited Delune at her new studio in Montpellier, France over the summer. Attached below.

Recently moving her studio from Lisbon, back to France, the artist's continuous source of inspiration has to be photographs and drawings of medical plants, and trees taken from her travels in DR Congo. Delune's commitment to experimentation continues as she weaves dreams and fantasies to create a utopian world. Inspired by spirituality, geometry, anatomy, animism and astrology – the artist presents spiritual maps on canvas and large-scale dreamscapes on linen.

Alongside a noticeable shift to stronger colours in this body of work, Delune uses acrylic, oil pastels, spray paint, threads, and paper, to calibrate the complex with the ethereal, accenting her creations with pencils and glitter. Finding equilibrium between darkness and depth, intellect and playfulness, she is interested in giving life and spirit to each aspect of the natural world.

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Giving an audible dimension to *The Geography of Feelings*, Delune has collaborated with composer Guilhem Tamisier (Bazartropicando) to create two musical compositions (19 minutes each). Delune invites the audience to experience a soundscape infused with fragments and voices of her travels. Each track is a collection of musical stories which all together, act as a sonic expression of the shapes, colours and motions conveyed in the paintings.

This will be Delune's second exhibition with Gallery 1957 following her residency and debut show with Gallery 1957 Accra in early 2023, and her solo presentation of paintings at Art Basel Miami Beach 2023.



*'Nowhere I Cannot Roam?'* 2024, 150 x 180 cm, Mixed media on cotton canvas.  
Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery 1957.

## ***The Geography of Feelings* - Tiffanie Delune's new paintings By Jennifer Higgin**

In Tiffanie Delune's new paintings, colours and shapes swirl and spiral in a dizzying evocation of worlds – both psychological and material – in flux. In vibrant, occasionally textured, tones, swift lines describe circles, triangles and mysterious grids; flowers bloom, heat pulsates and a sense of both turbulence and balance reigns. Although ostensibly abstract, images emerge from the maelstrom: exuberant forms which evoke mango trees and spines, butterfly wings, brains and lungs rise from a ground in which materials such as sand and cotton papercuts are variously mixed with oil and acrylic paint, pastel, spray paint, gold leaf and thread. When I visited Delune in her high-ceilinged studio in Montpellier in the South of France, she explained that her starting point is always the natural world. 'I'm obsessed', she said, 'with trees, flowers and fruits; shapes in nature that echo the human body and that evoke human emotions'.

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Delune gathers source material for her paintings from what she describes as a ‘wondering wandering’ – which is why she has titled her exhibition at Gallery 1957 in October 2024 *The Geography of Feelings*. Of French, Belgian and Congolese descent, she has lived in Paris, London and Lisbon and has recently moved to Montpellier; aptly, one of her recent paintings, which comprises a swirl of energetic pigments beneath a striped mustard rainbow shape and candles, is titled *Nowhere I Cannot Roam*. The artist has a large pinboard in her studio covered with images, including photographs of mango trees she shot travelling in DR Congo, where her father was born. Other materials include anatomical diagrams of spines, a pelvis and lungs; a drawing of yin and yang and reproductions of a dreamy Joan Miró painting; a sketch of the cosmos by the Swedish spiritualist artist Hilma af Klint and the Belgian surrealist René Magritte’s *Le Château des Pyrénées* (The Castle of the Pyrenees) from 1959, which depicts a stone castle on an enormous rock floating above the sea. She also has printouts of text works from Pinterest: one, a colour chart for identifying emotions, the other a drawing of vanishing point perspective with the slogan: ‘We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are’.

The artist’s inspiration board functions as an entry point to creating the paintings. Working instinctively, Delune makes sketches, which she then transposes onto canvas, weaving in fragments of dreams – which, she says, are ‘very, very important’ – and recollections, ‘symbols of my mixed-race family, hints of femininity and flux of spirituality’. She doesn’t project her drawings onto the canvas, preferring instead to roughly transpose them: it’s important, she says, to allow for creative mistakes to happen. Her dialogue with both her subjects and her materials is an organic one; she stresses that it’s an important part of the process to allow ‘things to happen that you can’t control’. She says she welcomes the ‘accidents, unexpected dialogues and moments of joy’, which emerge when you give yourself permission ‘to do whatever you need to do without thinking about it too much’. Delune doesn’t plan what colours she will use – ‘they come intuitively’ – but she knows that what she’s searching for is ‘the right vibration’. Her aim is to expand the possibilities of abstraction ‘even though the thinking in the first place is not really abstract.’ I ask her why she feels abstraction is important. She replies: ‘It’s a kind of pure energy. And it gives you the freedom and confidence to develop your own language, your own shapes, your own lines.’

Many of the shapes that pulsate across Delune’s canvases could be termed ‘biomorphic’, from the Greek words bios (life) and morphe (shape). It’s often used to describe the work of a loose cross-section of twentieth-century modernist artists – from Hilma af Klint and Sophie Taeuber Arp, to Barbara Hepworth and Louise Bourgeois (an artist, in particular, who Delune cites as an influence) – all of whom were drawn to organic forms: the spiral of a snail’s shell or a staircase, a pebble, the curve of a body and cells observed under a microscope. The meaning of these shapes is open-ended; they can be employed to various ends – literal, symbolic, metaphorical. In Delune’s paintings, forms that curve, swell, swirl or balloon are contrasted with tough black lines and geometric shapes – the suggestion of timelessness amid modernity’s impatience. In the artist’s world, a riff on a tree or a flower is as expressive of multitudes as the hard lines of a minimalist painting.

Delune sees myriad connections everywhere – between humans and plants, dreams and cosmic energies, ancestors and the present moment. She titled a recent painting *Apophenia* – a word derived from the Greek, that describes a predisposition to see echoes between seemingly unrelated things, for example, the bones in a human back and a tree trunk, a pelvis and a butterfly. In the painting, two geometric structures, formed of triangles, circles and lines rendered in primary colours, stretch towards what could be a sky formed soft drifts of pink, pale blue and yellow clouds. At their base are hand-stitched orange and dark-blue circles. Delune loves what she describes as ‘the simple beauty’ of sewing and finds the slowness of its execution therapeutic and meditative. She says: ‘I’m putting things

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together, I'm arranging, and I love that.' She is also moved by the connection not only to the history of women weaving and sewing but by its connection to Africa, which, across its many countries, has a rich textile history. The artist is drawn to the tactility that thread lends a painting; she calls it 'a little bit of a 3D spirit, like you want to touch it', something which counters what she sees as a negative: a static image.

The middle bottom third of *Apophenia* is dominated by a kind of cosmic tree, its branches curving sensually upwards, as if they're floating; around it drift shapes that evoke jellyfish or seaweed, and thick crustations of sand. Stay long enough, and various associations emerge: a face or a fragment? Veins or sea-creatures? Vertebrae or trees? Oceans or universes? Spirits or spectres? The options are endless.

Similarly, in *How Strong is Your Spine?* a vertebrae-like shape anchors the middle of the composition like a fusion of a human and the natural world; its 'branches' morph into a spread of indigo blue, while its 'roots' bloom like algae. Around the extremities of the painting are dissolving flashes of glowing orange circles, which hover against a turbulent background of agitated gold. It's a painting that could be read on so many levels; none, the artist makes clear, is necessarily more accurate than another.

Given the preponderance of spirals and angles in her work, I ask Delune for her thoughts on sacred geometry – the association, explored by many artists and craftspeople across millennia, between geometric proportions and a divine creator. Her answer is ambivalent: whilst she finds the idea compelling, she doesn't, she says, 'believe in perfection'. She's more interested in the messy 'magic of humanity', believing that, despite our differences, 'we're magnetic to each other'. Influenced by her journeys, both actual and metaphorical, she's more comfortable with a description of her paintings as 'inner maps': images that have emerged from her travels, and, she believes, through the generations of her ancestors via DNA. Reality, for her, 'is not really one thing'. She understands it as something that 'is based on your emotions and your own perceptions and it constantly changes'.

The likelihood of each viewer bringing a different understanding to a painting is, for Delune, a cause for joy. She sees each of her works as a prompt for storytelling, a celebration of human connection and the importance of reverie. For her, the most important thing is

that the viewer is transported somewhere, whether or not it's a real place, it doesn't matter. I'm taking you to a parallel or otherworldly space and I might make you dream for a minute. That, for me, is what real art is, that's the magic of it.

Delune is a great lover of music and for her exhibition at Gallery 1957 in October 2024 she worked with Guilhem Tamisier, a composer to create a soundscape comprised of fragments recorded on the streets, markets and transport of various cities – her aunt, for example, buying vegetables in Kinshasa or a song playing in a cab. *There are two tracks to choose from that last for around 18 minutes each* – the amount of time Delune expects someone to stay in the gallery – and you can download it to your phone and listen to as you look at her paintings. It adds yet another dimension to an already complex body of work. Both Delune's paintings and her venture into audio make clear: if you open yourself up to unexpected possibilities, new worlds will greet you.

- Critical text by Jennifer Higgin

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## About the Artist Tiffanie Delune

(b. 1988, France. Lives and works in Montpellier, France)

Expanding from an initial focus on personal trauma and childhood experiences, Delune is interested in the magic of storytelling that engages conversations and evokes emotions. Previous solo presentations include 'There is Gold on the Palms of my Hands' Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana (2023); 'See Me Flowing', Band of Vices, Los Angeles, USA (2022); 'There's Gasoline in My Heart', Foreign Agent, Lausanne, Switzerland (2022); 'Seeds of Light', Ed Cross Fine Art, London, UK (2020) and 'Metamorphosis', Something Gallery, London, UK (2019). Group exhibitions include, 'The Fabric Of Life', Vortic Art x Paul Smith, London, UK (Forthcoming, 2024); 'A Spirit Inside', Compton Verney, Warwickshire, UK (2024); 'Touching The Sky', Mucciaccia Contemporary, Rome, Italy (2023); 'A Spirit Inside', The Lightbox, Woking, Surrey, UK (2023); 'In and Out of Time', Curated by Ekow Eshun, Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana (2023); 'UNLIMITED', Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana (2022); 'The Storytellers', Gallery 1957, London, UK (2022); 'Mother Nature', The Core Club, New York (2022); 'Her Dark Materials', Online with Eye Of The Huntress, London, (2021); 'In The Beginning', Online with Ed Cross Fine Art, London (2021); 'Shape of the New', Online with ArtCan, London (2021) and 'In The Midst of All That Is', Band of Vice, Los Angeles (2021).

In 2022, Delune was nominated for the 2023 Norval Sovereign African Art Prize. Between January and March 2023, the artist was in residency with Gallery 1957, Accra. In 2021, Delune was nominated for the Reiffers Art Initiative Prize in Paris, France and in 2018, she completed a residency with 16/16 in Lagos, Nigeria. Delune has been featured on Forbes, BBC Radio London, The Financial Times, The Evening Standard, Cultured Magazine, Artillery Magazine and Artsy. Her work is held in various private collections and the permanent collections of the Fondation Gandur pour l'Art in Geneva, Switzerland as well as the Alexandra Cohen Presbyterian Hospital for Women and Newborns in New York and The Women's Art Collection of the Murray Edwards College at Cambridge University, UK.

## About Gallery 1957

Gallery 1957 is a contemporary art gallery with spaces across Accra, Ghana and London, UK.

It dedicates its programme to spearheading international exchanges between art practices from these communities and the rest of the world, presenting artists who interrogate concepts of belonging and identity, cultural exchange, and social history beyond Western narratives.

Launched by Marwan Zakhem in 2016 on Ghanaian Independence Day, Gallery 1957 has since expanded across three gallery spaces in Accra. Originally set up to promote Ghana and West Africa's presence in the arts scene, it now encompasses the Global South and its diaspora. Gallery 1957's London space opened in October 2020, providing a further platform for artists to build dialogues with its growing network of international collaborators.

Gallery 1957 presents exhibitions, installations, and performances by celebrated artists, fostering connections between local and international audiences. The Gallery's global gallery partnerships and ongoing artist residency program have attracted numerous international artists and arts professionals to Ghana. The Gallery's annual Cultural Week in September serves as a platform for encouraging deeper engagement with Ghana's vibrant contemporary art scene.

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# Gallery

In 2021, Gallery 1957 launched the Yaa Asantewaa Art Prize for female Ghanaian artists, the first ever dedicated art prize of its kind. The prize aims to further strengthen the gallery's commitment to supporting and promoting emerging and established artists.

Gallery 1957's work expands beyond the gallery walls through a public programme that includes local and international art fairs, talks, off-site projects, and site-specific installations as well as the publication of books and catalogues – continuously supporting cultural initiatives in Ghana, Africa and beyond.

Artist: Tiffanie Delune

Title: The Geography of Feelings

Dates: 3<sup>rd</sup> October – 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Opening Reception: - Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 6pm-9pm

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