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Naudline Pierre at Shulamit Nazarian

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Text by Essence Harden



Naudline Pierre, *Eternal Depth of Love Divine* (2019) Oil on panel, 34 x 48 inches.
Image courtesy of the artist and Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles.

Naudline Pierre's first solo exhibition at Shulamit Nazarian, *For I Am With You Until the End of Time*, features lustrous responses to the possibilities of world creation, faith, and reverie. In Pierre's odyssey-esque visions, subjects flow through a sensual landscape beholden to a queered spirituality where neither gender nor racial belonging is certain. The worlds Pierre creates are fostered through her grappling

with both her devout Christian upbringing and her interest in Judeo-Christian religious iconography in 15-17th Western art history. Pierre's works act as a kind of reconciliation with the sensations and aesthetics that propel orthodox thought while pushing towards a more equitable narrative. Not quite a subversion of these dogmatic frames, through her depictions of the bodies of apostles and angels, the meeting of brilliant sky and earth, and the shine of halos and showers of light, Pierre tells another kind of spiritual parable.

Using oil, acrylic, and pastel, Pierre posits richly hued, neon-tinged figures as the authors and arbiters of her mythologies. These subjects seemingly navigate the canvas as if it is a visual diary, directing the viewer to scenes of remembrance. Pierre uses an alter-ego as her central character—opaque, nude, and colored saffron, violet, crimson, or magenta—who journeys us through their fleshy, spiritual constellation. This figure floats across multiple canvases, descending from the heavens and resting in fire, surrounded by winged spirits. With *Lest You Fall* (all works 2019)—all the works are similarly titled with nostalgic prose—Pierre paints a falling saffron hued subject in the hold of a multi-colored winged entity. The work gestures towards the Renaissance masters Michelangelo, Caravaggio and El Greco in the positioning of subjects, the embrace, and the rendering of nimble, saturated bodies. In *The Affliction of Love*, our protagonist wrestles with a snake who has left a still-bleeding puncture wound at their ankle. The dark brown background is punctuated with a golden light that radiates behind their calm body, sparking around the snake's gaping mouth. Pierre plays with the snake—an emblem of biblical chaos—while allowing neither creature nor protagonist to achieve clear victory.

Both *Love Becomes Her* and *Eternal Depth of Love Divine* are triptychs, three arched panels hinged together like Renaissance altarpieces. In these two works, the winged figures gaze tenderly upon and surround our principal character as showers of light descend upon them all. The shining and varied skin of each figure suggests a new world divinity, wherein whiteness/Western supremacy are not the inherent authorities. *For I Am With You Until the End of Time* insists an intimacy between spirit and descendent where absolution and rebirth are forged between acts of sentiment and recognition.

Naudline Pierre: For I Am With You Until the End of Time runs from September 7 – October 26 at Shulamit Nazarian (616 N. La Brea Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90036).

