

## The annexe

# John Maclean

14<sup>th</sup> January – 18<sup>th</sup> February 2022

The Approach is delighted to present the first solo exhibition in the UK by London-based, Scottish artist John Maclean.

With a focus on landscape and contemplative outdoor scenes, Maclean sources his imagery from salvaged, hand-tinted postcards or print-outs from the internet. Editing out the majority of a full image, he concentrates on an otherwise peripheral feature, such as a tree, house, waterfall or mountain, enhancing the registration of the images (often affected by discoloration) with new rich and exaggerated hues. Using watercolour on board, Maclean's modestly sized paintings follow a repetitive process of application, rubbing down and re-painting, creating a palimpsestic surface where the previous layers are only discretely visible.

Although small, these paintings evoke ideas of a larger narrative, where we, the viewer, only experience a single vignette from a much broader storyline. With its story-telling qualities, it is difficult not to compare Maclean's approach to painting with his other creative pursuit in writing and directing films. However, in a recent interview, he also pointed out what he enjoys most about the particularities and differences between the two practices: "painting is most like writing – in terms of its relationship to filmmaking. You need time to think and to experiment. It is essentially a lonely pursuit. Much of one's time is spent on research, on dreaming, on false starts and minor breakthroughs. When it comes to actually shooting a film, it's probably as far from painting as can be; making a film is all collaboration, a form of improvised madness, watching the clock, and shifting with the external circumstances. I love this social and chaotic aspect of filmmaking precisely because it's the opposite of painting."<sup>1</sup>

John Maclean (b. Perth, Scotland 1972) lives and works in London, England. He studied at Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland (1990-1994) and the Royal College of Art (1994-1996). Following Maclean's time studying at The RCA he became a founding member of the influential group The Beta Band (1996-2005); contributing keyboards and eclectic use of layered sampled sounds along with idiosyncratic music videos and live performance film backdrops. In 2009 Maclean directed his first short film 'Man on a Motorcycle' starring Michael Fassbender. His feature film 'Slow West' was released to wide critical acclaim in 2015. After a long hiatus Maclean returned to painting during the pandemic and started to post images of the resulting works to his Instagram account. The paintings were noticed by White Columns director Matthew Higgs and Maclean was subsequently offered his first solo show which took place at White Columns in New York in March 2022.

For further information or images please contact Alba Herrero at [alba@theapproach.co.uk](mailto:alba@theapproach.co.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> John Maclean in conversation with Matthew Higgs, April 2022, <https://whitecolumns.org/exhibitions/john-maclean/>

### The approach

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