

# William McKeown

## An Open Room

30 August – 30 September 2023

Opening & Book Launch:  
Thursday 7 September, 6–8pm

**Kerlin Gallery is delighted to announce *An Open Room*, an exhibition of William McKeown's paintings and works on paper from the last decade of his life.**

**William McKeown's** art was driven by a lifelong pursuit of openness and a belief in the primacy of feeling. His paintings act like windows into the expansiveness beyond, offering liberation from constraint, or quite simply a breath of air, and a point of connection with the world. In the twelve years since his untimely passing, the artist's work has continued to resonate with new audiences worldwide, and the underlying quest of his work – for hope, freedom, connection, happiness, dancing, and oneness with nature – remains as vital as ever.

McKeown's oil paintings use subtle gradations of tone to create moments of exquisite beauty, heightened by a tension between freedom and containment. The works in *An Open Room* range from a clear sky blue through the subtle gradients of twilight into bolder, more contrastive works and finally into more sombre tones of grey and black. These late paintings often feature painted borders that appear irregular, broken or perhaps permeable or 'open.' In one instance, the perimeter encloses only three sides – "a post-and-lintel framing of a luminous field beyond", suggests Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith in a newly commissioned text.

*An Open Room* also includes a number of watercolour works on paper – "each an exquisite modulation of colour and



light within its tremulously delineated rectangular enclosure" (Mac Giolla Léith). They include several *Hope* drawings, in which a mesmerising horizon-like glow radiates across the page, and a series of works titled *Freedom Drawing – Starlings*, in which tiny orbs float upwards like birds in flight. As with the oil paintings, these works demonstrate McKeown's attentive observation of the natural world – intended not as a direct representation but as an expression of how nature can make us feel, how the sky is also our breath, and a reminder of our proximity to the infinite.

*An Open Room* coincides with the publication of *In an Open Room*, a comprehensive monograph of McKeown's work featuring illuminating texts from Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, Isabel Nolan, John Hutchinson, Declan Long, and the artist himself. The book chronicles 15 years of McKeown's output, as well as documentation of his posthumous exhibitions in locations including Inverleith House; Loewe; the Dallas Museum of Art; Château La Coste, and CCS Bard.

### Media Contact

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***Clockwise from desk:***

1. Untitled and undated  
oil on linen  
100 x 95.4 cm

2. *Untitled*, 2008  
oil on linen  
45.5 x 45.5 cm

3. *Hope Drawing #18*, 2005  
watercolour on paper  
61 x 54 x 3 cm framed

4. *Hope Drawing #26*, 2005  
watercolour on paper  
61 x 54 x 3 cm framed

5. *Hope Drawing #19*, 2005  
watercolour on paper  
61 x 54 x 3 cm framed

6. *Untitled*, 2008  
oil on linen  
43 x 43 cm

7. *Raining*, 2008  
oil on linen  
43 x 43 cm

8. *Untitled*, 2009–2011  
oil on linen  
45.5 x 45.5 cm

9. *Painting No. 271*, 2009–11  
oil on linen  
43 x 40.5 cm

10. *The Seagulls*, 2008  
oil on linen  
43 x 43 cm

11. *Untitled*, 2009–2011  
oil on linen  
48 x 48 cm

12. *Untitled*, 2009–2011  
oil on linen  
182 x 168 cm

13. *Untitled*, 2008  
oil on linen  
46 x 46 cm

14. *Mirror Drawing*, 2003  
watercolour on paper  
79.5 x 60.5 cm framed

15. *Starlings*, 2008  
oil on linen  
40.5 x 40.5 cm

16. *Freedom Drawing – Starlings #6*, 2006  
watercolour on paper  
61 x 54 x 3 cm framed

17. *Freedom Drawing – Starlings #4*, 2006  
watercolour on paper  
61 x 54 x 3 cm framed

18. *Freedom Drawing – Starlings #3*, 2006  
watercolour on paper  
61 x 54 x 3 cm framed

19. *Untitled*, 2010–2011  
oil on linen  
43 x 43 cm