

DOMINIC CHAMBERS

Leave Room for the Wind

January 4 – February 3, 2024

New York



Dominic Chambers, *Leave Room for the Wind*, 2023 (detail)

Lehmann Maupin is pleased to announce *Leave Room for the Wind*, an exhibition of new work by artist Dominic Chambers. Born in St. Louis, MO (1993) and currently based in New Haven, CT, Chambers creates vibrant paintings that frequently portray scenes of leisure, joy, and quiet contemplation. In his newest body of work, Chambers continues his examination of the contemporary role of leisure—focusing on its relationship to nature—and explores how art can function as a mode for understanding, recontextualizing, or renegotiating one’s relationship to the world. *Leave Room for the Wind* coincides with the artist’s debut solo museum exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (on view through February 15, 2024) and marks the artist’s first major solo exhibition in New York.

Chambers is often inspired by literature and has cited Magical Realism, alongside writings by W.E.B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin, as significantly influential to his practice. For *Leave Room for the Wind*, Chambers turned to poetry, engaging with the writing of Tracy K. Smith, Ocean Vuong, and Mary Oliver. The artist took particular inspiration from Oliver’s book-length poem *The leaf and the Cloud*, in which the author states “*I will leave room for the wind combing the grass, / for the feather falling out of the grouse’s fan-tail, / and fluttering down, like a song.*” Drawing simultaneously from the art historical cannon and combining fundamental tenets from formal models like color field painting and gestural abstraction, in this body of work Chambers explores the recreational activity of kite flying, considering what it might mean to “leave room for the wind” as Oliver suggests.

Across the exhibition Chambers situates his subjects in vibrant landscapes that evoke both the sublime and the surreal. The richly-hued paintings depict open fields saturated in primary hues of red, yellow, and blue, many of which are populated by figures flying kites. The pastime traces its origins to military use (kites were originally tools for signaling, observation, and even the delivery of ammunition), but today is profoundly associated with recreation and the outdoors. A deeply domestic activity pursued solely for its own sake, kite flying is unconnected with external recognition or reward—an enjoyable way to spend time doing nothing.

Chambers’ omission of any buildings or landmarks in this series creates a sense of privacy, and none of his figures engage the viewer. In the titular painting *Leave Room for the Wind*, a pair of children race across a blue-green field trailed by a set of translucent kites, while in another work two young boys stand still, flying blue, yellow, and purple kites across a pink-red sky. The children appear fully removed from the rhythms of daily life, unbound by time or expectations, completely immersed in their activities. In these scenes and throughout the exhibition, Chambers proposes that enjoyment, stillness, or wonder can act as a gateway to private life, and that leisure and recreation are critical to replenishing one’s interiority. *Leave Room for the Wind* calls us to remember our capacity for stillness, and reminds us of what we might find when we allow ourselves to venture there.



Portrait by Daniel Kukla

Dominic Chambers (b. 1993 St. Louis, MO; lives and works in New Haven, CT) creates vibrant paintings that simultaneously engage art historical models, such as color-field painting and gestural abstraction, and contemporary concerns around race, identity, and the necessity for leisure and reflection. Interested in how art can function as a mode for understanding, recontextualizing, or renegotiating one's relationship to the world, the artist sees painting as a critical and intellectual endeavor, as much as an aesthetic one. A writer himself, Chambers draws inspiration from literature, especially Magical Realism and the writing of W.E.B. Du Bois, particularly Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, and one of its central themes—the veil. A product of racial injustice that is a metaphorical lens through which Black bodies are observed and experienced, references to

the veil appear throughout the artist's work, whether in the large swaths of color that obscure the figures in his *Wash Paintings* series, or in his recurring use of a raindrop motif as both an active and passive element in his paintings. Many of Chambers' compositions incorporate Fabulist elements, including ghostly silhouettes meant to be stand-ins for the artist and surreal landscapes that feel both familiar yet unplaceable.

Chambers' most recent bodies of work feature his friends and acquaintances engaged in acts of leisure and contemplation. "Too often, the Black body has been located in our imaginations as one incapable of rest," the artist explains, "often when we imagine what the Black body is doing it is usually an act of labor, rebellion, or resistance." In his *Primary Magic* and *After Albers*

series, Chambers sought to remove these associations. His subjects are depicted reading or lost in thought, their gaze fixed on points that seem far beyond the realm of the picture plane. Locating his figures in shifting, monochromatic dreamscapes, Chambers suggests the mutability of our environment, and his scenes evoke the sensation of losing oneself in a good book or moment of quiet reflection. The artist sees color as a protagonist in his paintings—as important to unlocking their meaning as his subjects. Chambers’ deft manipulation of the tension and interplay between contrasting colors gives his work a subtle electric charge, while his eye for balance imbues each piece with a particular poetic harmony.

Chambers received his B.F.A from Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, Milwaukee, WI in 2016, and his M.F.A. from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT in 2019. Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St. Louis, MO (forthcoming); Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art, Reston, VA (2022); Lehmann Maupin, New York, NY (2022); The August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Pittsburgh, PA (2020); Luce Gallery, Turin, Italy (2020); The Millitzer Studio and Gallery, St. Louis, MO (2017); and the Residential Gallery, Des Moines, IA (2017).

Select group exhibitions featuring his work include *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting*, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town, South Africa (2022); *Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami’s Collection*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL (2022); *Black Bodies, White Spaces: Invisibility & Hypervisibility*, Green Family Foundation, Dallas, TX (2021); *Realms of Refuge*, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL (2021); *Art Finds a Way*, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL (2020); *Synchronicity*, Roberts Projects, Los Angeles, CA (2020); *Abstractions of Black Citizenship: African American Art from Saint Louis*, Hedreen Gallery, Seattle University, Seattle, WA (2020); *Painting Is Its Own Country*, Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, Charlotte, NC (2019); *Chambers & Weinberg*, Hawthorn Contemporary, Milwaukee, WI (2019); *Again, Always*, Green Hall Gallery, Yale University, New Haven, CT (2019); *Between Two Worlds*, Band of Vices, Los Angeles, CA (2019); *Interwoven*, Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York, NY (2018); *Water & Dreams*, The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI and Chicken Coop Contemporary, Portland, OR (2017); *NOW Figuration*, Portrait Society Gallery of Contemporary Art, Milwaukee, WI (2017); *Bridge Work 02: From Memory to Metaphor*, Arts + Literature Laboratory, Madison, WI (2017); *Post Mode 2.0*, John Fonda

Gallery, Baltimore, MD (2016); *Bridge Work 02: From Memory to Metaphor*, The Pitch Project Gallery, Milwaukee, WI (2016); *Post Mode*, NYSRP Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2015); *Final Exhibition*, Yale Norfolk School of Art, Norfolk, CT (2015); *Deconstructing the Local*, MIAD Galleries, Milwaukee, WI (2014); *Progress*, Contemporary Art Gallery, St. Louis Community College – Florissant Valley, St. Louis, MO (2013); and *Varsity Art XVIII*, Art Saint Louis, St. Louis, MO (2013).

Chambers’ work is in a number of private and public collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (promised gift); Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA; Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA (promised gift); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, Belgium; Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art, Rizhao, China.

Chambers is the recipient of the Robert Reed Drawing Scholarship, Yale University, New Haven, CT (2018); Ellen Battell Stoeckel Fellowship, Yale Norfolk School of Art (awarded through Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design) (2015); and the Varsity Art XVIII Award, St. Louis Community College – Florissant Valley, St. Louis, MO (2014). He has completed residences at the New York Studio Residency Program, Brooklyn, NY (2015), and the Yale Norfolk School of Art, Norfolk Historic District, CT (2015).

**LEHMANN MAUPIN**

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since Inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity, and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.

NEW YORK

501 West 24th Street
New York, NY 10011
+1 212 255 2923

CONTACT

Adriana Elgarresta, Global Director of Public Relations
adriana@lehmannmaupin.com

Alejandro Jassan, Associate Director of Press Relations
alejandro@lehmannmaupin.com

General Inquiries
newyork@lehmannmaupin.com