

PRESS RELEASE

Austin Eddy

Songs For The Sun.

February 3 – March 28, 2024

Opening on Friday, February 2, 6 – 9 pm

Lichtenfelsgasse 5, A-1010 Vienna

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *Songs For The Sun.*, the gallery's first exhibition with the US-American artist Austin Eddy.

Across mediums Eddy's work is of multiple minds speaking in a rhythmic unison. Abstraction coalesces into figuration, as shapes become images and images shapes. Texture becomes a material contradiction and the illusionistic warping of viewers' expectations. It all fits firmly in the tradition of modernism, renewing it a century later while simultaneously breaking it apart. That high art purity melding with an interest in and celebration of more vernacular pursuits. Quilting, collage, the flattened perspectives of rural folk painting that invent ways of depicting landscape and narrative away from classical representational and cinematic models of storytelling. The work manages to maintain a connection with early artforms across culture, be deeply American in spirit and yet insert itself into classical western traditions and genealogies. Within all of it is a sensibility for embedding feelings and the felt in ways that is universally read and personally interpreted. Beneath these images and objects private lives and understandings are beckoned to thrive.

For some time the work has inferred the avian, from gentle suggestion to outright depiction. On Earth, birds are ubiquitous, thriving across environments: land, sea, desert, jungle, rural and urban, alone and in flocks. Like humans they have spread and filled the earth in thousands of variations and for millennia cultural thinkers have drawn connections, in metaphor and simile, tying this class of animals conceptually together with the human. Unlike our earth bound bodies they inspire awe with their ability to take to the skies, their unique feather coverings in hues unique in the natural world, projection of natural song, they're representations of freedom and its opposite as we lock them down for our enjoyment or envy an ability for seemingly endless travel. It's this ubiquity and adaptability, combined with everyday wonder, that centers itself within the practice of Austin Eddy. Relations that make an easy sense and yet contain underlying deepness and contradiction. In both, interest is maintained, even expanded upon, with existence and repetition. There's figuration undeniable in each of Austin Eddy's paintings, drawings and sculptures, but the key to this work is in the competition between perceived image and their balanced creation from forms and interactions of tone.

Pareidolia is the tendency for humans to see images, often of other humans or living creatures, in the random and natural shapes of other things. A puppy dog in the clouds, a simple face in an electrical outlet, that of an old woman in the burly knots of a tree. In the face of the nonsensical, or the abstract, the brain seeks out order for comfort. Within a group of works by Eddy we are confronted by both scenes clearly depicting the natural world and shapes that we interpret as being from them. Upon further reflection we must ask ourselves if the composition we witness is also figurative or if its surrounding companions are influencing us to turn circles and arcs and angles into a comprehensible whole. Enjoyment of the abstract never comes at the cost of beholding a scene.

That desire by the mind to bring order to images is complimented by our tendency to attach feelings and memories to forms and color as well. The eye not only searches out that which it knows, it clarifies further information of memory and time. We do this in many ways: truly personal, universal and contradictory. Blue might be understood as related to sadness, but not a blue sky. Red relates to passion, both love and hate. A certain green might remind one person of an object from childhood, another nothing at all. Austin Eddy's paintings use color as a dominant conversation, understanding the ability of hue to affect more than composition. Throughout the works his color palette works in unsettled ways, expected and unexpected, mimicking the tensions between figuration and abstraction the works also hold. The effect is that the images become both scenes and themes, patterns and depictions, as tone and form interact in dynamic ways across the body of work and within paintings themselves.

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That the figure and compositions at times recall patterning makes sense. In addition to their reduced geometric modernism Eddy's works also recall other vernacular forms of expression, especially American quilting. The delineated borders worked into some paintings and the repeated geometric shapes executed in differing colors bring to mind that craft, where dynamic forms of labor are built up with varieties of scrap and leftovers. The history of other things and other creative acts, as in these works, builds up into a more dynamic whole, where the patterning itself becomes a way for narrative communication. It is with these visual connections that one sees the ways that Eddy harnesses the modernist ideas of a pure art turning away from tradition and combines them with traditions usually excluded in classical understandings of art. In his negotiation of the decorative and the emotional, using a utilitarian logic that relates to cultural labor high and low, his works search for and find hope in modern life, mirroring it in ways abstracted and vital. In static execution the fluid nature of existence, human and that around us, becomes something grounded, radiating along wings ardent and energetic.

Mitchell Anderson

Austin Eddy (b. 1986) earned his BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2010. He now lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Since graduating he has exhibited nationally and internationally, his most recent solo exhibitions include: *In The Off Hours*, Livie Fine Art, Zurich, CH (2023); *Even An Island has The Ocean*, Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA, US (2023); *Sad Landscapes*, Académie Conti, Consortium, Dijon, FR (2022); *Immutable Traveler*, Galerie Knust Kunz, Munich, DE (2022); *Selected Poems*, Eva Presenhuber Showroom, NY, US (2022); *As The Crow Flies*, Baldwin Gallery, Aspen, CO, US (2021). He has also had solo exhibitions at Half Gallery, New York, NY, US (2020); SoCo Gallery, Charlotte, NC, US (2019), The University of Kentucky Hospital, Lexington, KY, US (2013) and The Horticultural Society of New York, NY, US (2013). He has also been included in various group exhibitions at: Art And Newport at The Vernon House, Newport, RI (2023); Frestonian Gallery, London, UK (2022); The Pit, Los Angeles, CA (2021); Shrine Gallery, New York, NY (2019); Galleri Thomassen, Gothenburg, Sweden (2018); Adams And Ollman, Portland, OR (2015). He has also been included in group exhibitions at The De La Cruz Collection, Miami, FL (2023 – 2024); The Urban Institute of Contemporary Art, Grand Rapids, MI (2022); New Hampshire and The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, MI (2019); The New Hampshire Institute of Art, Manchester, NH (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, Atlanta, GA (2014).

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