

PRESS RELEASE

**TANYA MERRILL**

*Watching women give birth on the internet  
and other ways of looking*

April 12 – May 18, 2024

Opening reception: Friday, April 12, 6-8 pm  
303 Gallery, New York



**303 Gallery is proud to announce *Watching women give birth on the internet and other ways of looking*, Tanya Merrill's second solo exhibition at the gallery, featuring new works. An opening reception will be held on Friday, April 12th from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm.**

True to her propensity for a cyclical and narrative installation, the show begins and ends with the creation of life. Each painting represents a diverse point of interest and concern to the artist— sexuality and ideas of fertility, the natural world and the fraught state of the environment, and the broader implications of contemporary technology, sports, and religion on the artist's experience as a woman today.



The scale of the subjects in each canvas approximate life, creating a one-to-one perspective when standing in front of, say, a tree trunk, a cat perched on a fish tank, or a man admiring himself with a basketball. One work shows a trompe l'oeil stack of papers illustrating a 15th century manuscript: an early representation of a woman's fertility cycle in relation to the stars. The modes for distributing images have changed, but the need to see them has not—jump ahead 800 years and the show's namesake painting frames the edge of a computer screen, documenting the recent phenomenon of sharing one's birthing story and corresponding photographs publicly on the internet.

Humans have always employed tools for looking. The earliest manufactured mirrors were made from volcanic glass in Turkey and date some 8000 years ago, the invention of the telescope advanced our understanding of Earth's place in the cosmos, a phone now captures our own image with a recent poll finding 92 million selfies are taken every day around the world: the Allegory of Sight and mythology of Narcissus regenerates. In *I love basketball*, a naked man

gazes affectionately at himself in the mirror. Coyly, he holds a basketball in front of his own genitalia; pensive yet playful, he engages the long tradition of masculinity in sports seen throughout art history. Across the gallery, a pregnant woman is doubled in the frame and photographs her changing body. The technology she clutches, perhaps soon to be obsolete, will be inextricably linked to the start of the 21st century.

The North American cecropia moth is seen on its host plant, a white birch tree, one of the few plants a Cecropia larva can eat. A recent report found dramatic rates of decline that may lead to the extinction of 40% of the world's insect species over the next few decades. And with a single nest of baby birds needing up to 9,000 caterpillars before they are ready to fledge, the looming demise and precarity of our food chain is blatant. Merrill is compelled to paint the species that are still here, a record that they really did live before they died. The ecologist David Wagner says of the insect decline, "... We don't know if it's an apocalypse or Armageddon."

In *Our family portrait/ Dancing over the town*, three skeletons— two human and one dog— are seen romping joyfully, even in death. The couple, winged and facing eternity together, point to religious imagery from a 17th century wall tomb, while the surrounding landscape references the art movements of Europe which inspired the Hudson River School Painters— an homage to the place this exhibition was made. Merrill's studio in the Hudson Valley can be seen nestled in the bottom left corner of the canvas.

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tanya Merrill was born in New York City in 1987. She received her BA from Sarah Lawrence College and her MFA from Columbia University. Recent exhibitions include a solo presentation at the Museum of Natural History Basel for Art Parcours in 2023, and solo exhibitions at 303 Gallery, New York and The Pond Society, Shanghai in 2021.

#### CONTACT

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Images: Tanya Merrill, *Life on the inside*, 2024; Tanya Merrill, *Watching women give birth on the internet*, 2024