

Loriel Beltrán

*To Name the Light*

May 14 – June 22, 2024

London



Loriel Beltrán, *Total Collapse (Miami/Seoul)*, 2024

“Sculpture is durational in a way that painting is not. Painting can be observed in a glance, whereas sculpture has to be explored in time and space. I try to bring this sculptural animation to my wallworks while keeping that “glance” effect of painting. Painting is like a container where everything compresses into this one thing, whereas sculpture expands into more ambiguity.”

— Loriel Beltrán

Lehmann Maupin is pleased to present *To Name the Light*, the London debut of Miami-based, Venezuelan-born artist Loriel Beltrán. Featuring five new paintings, including the monumental work *Total Collapse (Miami/Seoul)*, 2024, the exhibition foregrounds the artist’s engagement with time—geological, biological, historical, linguistic—as a conceptual framework to explore the phenomenological effects of light, color, and materiality. This exhibition will be accompanied by the artist’s fully illustrated catalogue, including an essay by curator Katherine Rochester.

Beltrán has become known for his sculptural accumulations that poetically combine aspects of painting and sculpture. Employing custom-made molds and layers of paint, each work is produced through a meticulous process of pouring, embedding, compressing, drying, slicing, and finally assembling each vibrantly pigmented cross section into an abstract composition. Beltrán’s paintings materialize color in its full complexity in such a way that recalls the work of abstract painter and theorist Joseph Albers (1888-1976), whose exacting investigation of chromatic interaction expanded the possibilities for modern color theory. Albers asserted that “as basic rules of language must be practiced continually, and therefore are never fixed, so exercises toward distinct color effects never are done or over.” Beltrán has developed his own chromatic language that also incorporates an element of chance in the interplay between material viscosity, gravity, and time. The resulting images are prismatic, as though color and light are emanating from every visual cut / break in the composition.

*Total Collapse (Miami/Seoul)*, 2024, the centerpiece of the exhibition, is the literal and metaphorical collapse and compression of the body of work the artist produced for his recent exhibition at Lehmann Maupin, Seoul. Beltrán has incorporated residual elements and pieces of works from that show into the compressed layers, making the palette a register of prior paintings. Seemingly frozen in a transitional state of becoming and disintegrating, between representation and abstraction, the painting is composed of striated sections of typically discordant pigments—vibrant blues, reds, greens, and yellows are placed next to areas of deep maroons and browns, next to pastel pinks, purples, and blues—to surprising and sometimes technicolor effect. In a recent interview with the artist, curator Katherine Rochester states, “Beltrán’s work applies increasing pressure to the distinctions between categories that organize our anthropocentric view of the world. Nature and culture, science and philosophy, language and image, sculpture and painting are all subjected to a series of artistic operations that create new forms from a hybrid use of references and materials. ‘What remains on the other side of total collapse?’” For Beltrán, it seems that what remains is an endless set of possibilities in the undefined space of perception.

While *Total Collapse* draws from the artist’s own personal painting history, other works in the exhibition, like *Sulfur Aerosol*, 2024 and *Dark Path/Dark Past*, 2024, skillfully traverse art history by exploring the genre of landscape painting, drawing inspiration from the legacy of early 19th-century Romantic painters such as J.M.W. Turner and Caspar David Friedrich. The sense of awe, mystery, and grandeur that Turner and Friedrich sought to invoke in their atmospheric impressions of the natural sublime serve as a touchstone for Beltrán. While he employs quite different techniques, Beltrán is interested in encouraging a similarly direct viewing experience that connects us with our surroundings on an emotional and spiritual level, inviting the possibility of infinity and wonder into the gallery. In *Sulfur Aerosol*, Beltrán depicts an acidic skyscape composed of layers of cotton candy pink, baby blue, and mustard yellow pigment. The surface of the painting vibrates with an alluring and ominous intensity, invoking in the viewer a similar sense of overwhelm to that induced by contemplation of the rapidly advancing effects of climate change. For Beltrán, the work is open to a variety of interpretations. He explains, “It has a toxic but seductive quality, the kind we usually get from technology and the idea of ‘progress’ and our curiosity for the next thing.”

In *Dark Path/Dark Past* Beltrán depicts a night scape that is created through an ombre effect—deep maroon transitioning into deep verdant green. Throughout, there are hints of bright yellow, blue, purple, and pink that suggest a scattering of objects, debris, or perhaps even people. The title alludes to the dark path / past of humanity, one marked with a violence that has had an irreparable impact on the landscape. Here as with the other works in the exhibition, Beltrán employs the language of abstraction to grapple with the complexity of human history, the vastness (and incomprehension) of the natural world, and indescribable physical experience of light and color. What captivates him, especially, is the profound connection between color—a manifestation of light—and its ties to substances originating from the sun, extracted from minerals, and developed into pigments.

Together the works in *To Name the Light* offer an excavation, a dissection, a dispersion and deciphering of time and history—personal, shared, and that of painting. Previously, Beltrán described the interplay between chosen combinations of colors as “panels of code;” rather than representing an image, they comprise a distinct visual language, replete with numerous possibilities for imagery. Beltrán transforms the code into a rich repository of accumulated knowledge, experience, memory, and signification.

Loriel Beltrán (b. 1985, Caracas, Venezuela; lives and works in Miami, FL) creates sculptural accumulations of paint and color that defy traditional notions of artistic media. Poetically merging painting and sculpture, the artist states that his works “resist becoming images” and instead materialize color in its full complexity. Situating his work between the legacy of Latin American modernism and postwar painting in the United States, Beltrán dissolves distinctions between image and object, surface and substance, plane and structure. While the artist considers perceptual effects, he remains equally invested in issues of materiality, process, and industry, foregrounding artistic labor and the residue it leaves behind.

Many of Beltrán’s works consider the interplay between particular combinations of colors, often indicated by technical abbreviations in his works’ titles. Beltrán has described the resulting works as “panels of code,” and rather than depicting a single image, they suggest a distinct visual language, replete with numerous possibilities for imagery. The artist’s surfaces are composed of layers of paint that have dried to create vibrating optical effects. To create his works, Beltrán produces custom molds and pours paint into them, allowing the paint to harden and dry over time. The artist sometimes integrates objects into his molds—such as leftover materials or detritus from his studio—to introduce “interruptions” into his compositions. He repeats this process for months or even years, as layers of paint coagulate and accumulate. The artist then removes the mold and slices the resulting object—a hardened block with swirls and layers of color—into strips using a custom-built machine. The strips are arranged into bold, planar compositions, which he adheres to a wooden substrate.

Beltrán was born in Venezuela and immigrated to the United States as a teenager, and he has cited a number of Venezuelan artists as significant influences. He identifies points of connection, for instance, between the physicality of his painted strips and Gego’s notion of the line as object, while his perceptually complex compositions also gesture to histories of the Op and Kinetic art movement in Venezuela, with the work of artists such as Jesús Rafael Soto and Carlos Cruz-Diez embedded in his visual memory. As a diasporic Miami-based artist, Beltrán locates his work at the intersection of a variety of art histories and traditions across the Americas. He identifies significant points of connections with a number of postwar United States artists, evoking Jack Whitten’s material experimentations, Lynda Benglis’s pours, Agnes Martin’s organic grids, the notion of the flatbed picture plane in Jackson Pollock’s work, Mark Rothko’s exploration of the color’s expressive potential, and Robert Morris’s engagement of chance and gravity, among others.

Beltrán resolutely asserts color’s materiality and its connections to labor and process as he explores its optical effects. Across his practice, Beltrán examines how color and light attach themselves to matter and form to suggest tactile, physical presences. The artist is struck by the way that color, while produced by light, also maintains connections to matter—emanating from the sun, extracted from minerals, produced as pigment. Beltrán’s practice grew out of his initial fascination with the buildup of dried paint on his palette,

and his works likewise draw upon an aesthetics of accumulation, reflecting a similar attention to the remnants of artmaking and the traces that color leaves behind. As his surfaces accumulate layers of paint, so too do they accumulate layers of memory and meaning.

Registering acts of artistic labor and visualizing the passage of time, Beltrán’s works evidence a slow and demanding physical process. The artist has stated that prior jobs in construction, fabrication, and installation continue to inform his artistic practice and his relationship to materiality. Beltrán’s work manifests this labor and physical exertion, and he distinguishes artistic labor from other forms of labor precisely because of its visibility. “Regular labor is meant to be invisible. If you see how a wall was painted, it’s a bad job,” he states. “Artistic labor is meant to be seen, or to expose itself.”



Beltrán earned his B.F.A from the New World School of the Arts, Miami, FL. Recent solo exhibitions of his work include *Over the Sun, Under the Earth* (2022), CENTRAL FINE, Miami, FL; *Constructed Color*, Museum of Art and Design, Miami, FL (2021); and *New Old Paintings*, CENTRAL FINE, Miami, FL (2020). Beltrán’s work has also been exhibited in a number of significant group exhibitions, including *Cut: Abstraction in the U.S. from the 1970s to the Present*, Frost Art Museum, Miami, FL (2019); *GUCCIVUITTON*, Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami, FL (2015); *T.A.Z.*, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL (2015); *Global Positioning Systems: Urban Imaginaries*, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL (2014); and *Liquid Matter*, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA (2011). Beltrán was also a co-founder and co-director of the artist-run gallery and collective Noguchi Breton (formerly GUCCIVUITTON). His work is included in a number of notable private and public collections, including the de la Cruz Collection, Miami FL; Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, Miami, FL; and Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL, among others.

**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 permanent locations in New York, Seoul, and London, as well as team members based in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, and Palm Beach. In recent years, with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.

**LONDON**

1 Cromwell Place  
South Kensington, London SW7 2JE  
+44 20 8057 1880

**CONTACT**

Adriana Elgarresta, Global Director of Public Relations  
[adriana@lehmannmaupin.com](mailto:adriana@lehmannmaupin.com)

McKenna Quatro Johnson, Communications and Research Associate  
[mckenna@lehmannmaupin.com](mailto:mckenna@lehmannmaupin.com)

General Inquiries  
[london@lehmannmaupin.com](mailto:london@lehmannmaupin.com)