

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

Vija Celmins: Winter

February 16 to April 6, 2024

Opening: Thursday, February 15, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce **Vija Celmins: Winter**, the next exhibition in his gallery at 522 West 22nd Street. The artist's first exhibition of new work in six years includes nine paintings, four sculptures, and one print.

The work in Celmins's exhibition is somber, poetic, and dark. The artist says she was "thinking about winter in all its implications." The new paintings continue her long-time interest in using imagery from nature, as well as her long relationship with the absence of color. *Snowfall (blue)* (2022–24), an eight-and-a-half-foot-tall canvas that is the largest painting she has ever made, depicts snow falling against the night sky. In *Snowfall (coat)* (2021–23), which is based on an image of snow collecting on the back of a coat, the dark ground provides a false allusion to the sky. The image, however, is not Celmins's primary interest. "Art is not an illustration, it is an invention," she says. "The paintings have an internal feeling, as if there were something behind what you see."

The scrutiny of Celmins's gaze is perhaps most evident in her objects. The exhibition includes a stone piece originally picked up in the California desert, cast in bronze in 1977 and then abandoned until 2020, as well as two new rope sculptures made from painted cast steel inspired by an old coil of sailing rope. *Cane* (2023) is made from painted bronze, the prickled surface meticulously painted to look like the rose cane on which it is based. Describing how she makes her sculptures, Celmins has said, "I developed a touch that you could hardly tell was a touch."

Vija Celmins was born in Riga, Latvia, in 1938 and immigrated to the United States with her family in the late 1940s. She studied at the John Herron School of Art in Indiana and attended a summer session at Yale University in 1961 before pursuing a master's degree at UCLA. After living in Los Angeles for almost two decades, she moved to New York in 1980. In 1992, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia organized the first retrospective of her work. She has had one-person exhibitions at numerous museums in the United States and Europe, including the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Menil Collection in Houston, and LACMA and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. In 2018–20, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art presented a retrospective of her paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints, which also traveled to the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto.

Vija Celmins: Winter is on view at 522 West 22nd Street from February 16 to April 6, 2024, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

For additional information please call 212-243-0200 or email inquiries@matthewmarks.com.