

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

NEW YORK | ASPEN

SUZANNE MCCLELLAND *HIGHLAND SEER*

On View: May 9 – June 8, 2024

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 9 | 6–8 PM
507 West 24th Street, New York, NY 10011



Suzanne McClelland, *Blind Contour-Why do you Wait in the Upper Air?*, 2024. Mixed media on canvas, 84 x 72 inches, 213.4 x 182.9 cm

NEW YORK, NY – Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *Highland Seer*, an exhibition of new work by Suzanne McClelland (b. 1959; Jacksonville, FL). For her second solo exhibition with Marianne Boesky Gallery, McClelland turns her keen observational eye to notions of measurement and prediction, incorporating divergent materials, forms, and modes of painting that she has developed throughout the course of her 35-year career.

A singular voice in contemporary art, McClelland examines the visual, semantic, and acoustic dimensions of language. Frequently beginning her paintings with a lexicon of words, phrases, characters, or numbers, McClelland builds upon these forms through drawing and writing, which are interchangeable throughout her practice. Repeating, burying, and dissolving these fragments of language, the artist alternately obscures and exposes their linguistic origins.

With *Highland Seer*, McClelland brings together work from her three studios—in Orient, Brooklyn, and Los Angeles—demonstrating both the breadth and depth of her current practice. While each painting bears the evidence of the specific environmental conditions under which it was made, the gathered body of work nevertheless pulls at common threads: language, measurement, notions of the self, erasure, and methods of prediction and divination. Various symbols and forms appear throughout this group of paintings—math problems, zeroes and infinity symbols, the body, and classic cartoon characters. Each of these subjects

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promises fixed meaning: math problems have one solution, zero is infinity's twin, the body is stable, Wile E. Coyote follows the same narrative formula time after time. Yet in McClelland's canvases, these forms become fluid: a number, divided by itself, equals itself; zero morphs into infinity; the body is represented in fragments, made up of only what the artist can see of herself as she works, and alternately duplicated or erased; and a predator becomes prey to their own machinations.

McClelland's practice is, in many ways, a study in how we interpret information, in how we take measure of what we see and hear, what we read and learn. Endlessly fascinated by communication—in all its forms—the artist here turns her attention to how we use linguistic and visual signifiers to identify and interpret the patterns found in our histories, both personal and societal. Throughout *Highland Seer*, McClelland deploys her array of forms—numbers, characters, bodies, phantoms, cartoon characters—in an effort not only to take stock of the past and the present, but to use these measures to address our endless desire to predict what the future may hold.

Highland Seer takes its title from *Reading Tea Leaves*, a slight volume written by an unnamed Scottish author first published in 1920. The author—identified only as a Highland Seer—offers guidance for those who wish to learn to read leaves, to interpret shapes as symbols, omens, or prophecies. Reading tea leaves is a rather quotidian method of divination, the Highland Seer tells us, “all that is required,” they write, “is for someone to read and interpret these symbols correctly in order to ascertain what is likely to happen.” Reading tea leaves may be an occult practice, but its rules are clear, each sign linked to a specific meaning. In its most basic form, reading leaves is a practice of identifying a shape and determining its associated interpretation.

With this handbook, the Highland Seer implies that a sense of certainty about the future is easy enough to come by, that a series of shapes and signs, read in context, will provide clarity—that a package will arrive or that we will return safely from a journey. Abstract paintings, like McClelland's gathering of work for this exhibition, offer something akin to the bottom of a teacup—a series of shapes and forms to be read and interpreted by the viewer. Yet, in McClelland's paintings—amidst her various origin inscriptions and unconventional materials and modes of making—these shapes tumble and fracture and fold, teetering on the edge of legibility or foretelling erasure, of the self, of language, of measurement. These signs and omens morph or disappear before they can be established with any clarity, before they can be identified and interpreted. The future, by its very nature, is uncertain, and we long to predict what may come. Yet, with these works, McClelland never provides the cosmic reassurance we long for.

ABOUT SUZANNE MCCLELLAND

McClelland's work has been exhibited extensively since the early 1990s. Solo exhibitions of her work have been presented at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT; the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, New York, NY; the Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA; and the Orlando Museum of Art, FL, among others. Her work was included in the 1993 and 2014 Whitney Biennials, and she has been included in group exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Parrish Art Museum, Watermill, NY; Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH; Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, MO; the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY. McClelland is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2019, an Anonymous Was A Woman Award, and a Nancy Graves Foundation Grant, and she has participated in international residencies, including the Troedsson Villa Residency in Nikko, Japan in 2019. Her work is held in numerous public collections including that of the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL; the Walker Art Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, among others. McClelland earned an MFA at the School of the Visual Arts, New York, NY and a BFA from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. McClelland lives and works in Brooklyn and Orient, NY.

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