

JI WON

CHA

AN ETERNITY FROM NOW

JUNE 29

AUGUST 03  
2024

*"Whether it tests the limits of consciousness, comprehension, imagination, or the senses, the sublime is that interruption, that flood of world toward the unitary self that threatens its integrity." -Lyuba Encheva*

Baert Gallery is pleased to present *An Eternity From Now*, a solo exhibition of works by Ji Won Cha on view from June 29 to August 3, 2024.

In this new suite of paintings, Cha seamlessly summons and surpasses reality, channeling a sublime, otherworldly vision. Her paintings alchemize chaos and control, compressing unbridled feeling into form. With an intuitive approach to color based on temperature, her works layer emotion into concentrated and pressurized painterly surfaces, making their eruption inevitable.

Cha collects reference photographs of nature, such as striking flowers or a stark network of branches. Yet her painterly expression is not a depiction of these references, instead transmuting their essence into entities from which colors burst. Once internalized as images of contemplation, she discards them, allowing the paint's primacy to take over, moving fluidly out of reference and into psychic reverberation.

Contradiction and catharsis are at the core of Cha's painting process. Ji Won begins through reckless abandon: paint is dispersed as evocative explosions of color throughout the canvas. Marks and movement emerge, enabling the artist to carve meanings out of the myriad forms that manifest. From there, the painting requires taming, generating logic and its own world that articulates intense emotion and exquisite craft. The works are simultaneously unique and universal, considering life's intensities, from swells of romance to solitary reflection.

In *He Hopes for An Eternity from Now* (2024), Cha powerfully presents her perspective of the sublime. The sprawling painting originates from the artist's experience of sitting in solitude on a bench in winter, watching a snow laden sunset. A pristine stillness seemed to envelop her, as she watched the frozen ocean. Still, under this barricade of

ice, she could hear remote and concealed waves crashing, invisible yet intense in their eternal motion. A radical realization of beauty and terror washed over her in this instant, with a lingering feeling of being alone in Earth's eternity. In the painting, this icy, oceanic blue dominates the composition, presenting the scene as more real than reality. Within this memory, the world became blue from its billowing waves, with twin senses of isolation and inspiration bound together in color. Sharp individual needles of paint swarm the upper parts of the piece, invoking death by a thousand cuts. Yet the sheer ritual of repetition transforms these singular punctures of pain, memory and discomfort into an accumulation of trauma and numbness. Through this totality, the swarm is softened into silk. The painting represents these complex contrasts, considering fate as a longing in the present for a future that we cannot see coming.

Working within what she defines as the 'Anxious Sublime', Ji Won's work is an inquiry into time. The 'Anxious Sublime' is the conundrum of our contemporary moment in which the future and past invade the present, both diminishing the moment into induced stress, while intoxicating our imagination with future fantasies. From this powerful paradox, the artist's paintings present both mesmerizing visions of another world and a menacing murmur underneath the scintillating surface.

**Ji Won Cha** (b. 1997, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea) lives and works in London. She earned her BFA in Painting from RISD and her MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art. Recent exhibitions include *Memory Concourse*, Thierry Goldberg Gallery, NYC (2024), *Transcendence*, Gate 45, Dubai, UAE (2023), *Now Introducing*, Studio West Gallery, London, UK (2023), *Summer Fling*, L.U.P.O.-Lorenzelli Projects, Milan, Italy (2023), and the two-person show *Dungeons and Daydreams* with Alya Hatta at Wilder Gallery, London (2023). In 2024, she was shortlisted for the Artsy foundations prize, and in 2023, she was shortlisted for the Jackson's Painting Prize.