

Dominic Chambers

Meraki

October 8 – November 9, 2024

London



Dominic Chambers, *Lemon Hour (Where you'll find me)*, 2024

When the sprites of ideas enter the studio and marry themselves to resolve of the artist committed to fully realizing them, one enters the summoning world—a state of creative immersion, that inner greenfield home to those things that shimmer: ideas, memory, dreams, and bodies without form or language, and perhaps angels live there too.
—Dominic Chambers

Lehmann Maupin is pleased to announce *Meraki*, an exhibition of new work by American artist Dominic Chambers, opening October 8th in the gallery's permanent space at Cromwell Place in London's South Kensington neighborhood. Marking the artist's first solo presentation in the United Kingdom, *Meraki* spans two floors and includes expansive paintings, brightly colored studies, and several works on paper. Chambers, born in St. Louis, MO and currently based in New Haven, CT, is best known for his vivid, colorful paintings that frequently depict scenes of leisure and contemplation as a mode for exploring ideas of personal interiority. In this exhibition, the artist expands his lens to the realm of devotion, engaging themes of inspired connection to work, art, and the natural world. The opening of *Meraki* coincides with London's Frieze week; a reception will be held on October 8th with the artist in attendance. Elsewhere in Europe, Chambers' work is included in the group exhibition *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting* at the Kunstmuseum Basel, on view through October 27th.

In creating his latest body of work, Chambers took the idea of *meraki*, a Greek word meaning "to pour one's soul into one's work," as an origin point. As the title of the exhibition, Chambers uses this concept as a frame of inquiry, contemplating what it might mean to pour oneself into a creative endeavor and how the concept of the soul, or one's own interiority, can intersect with ideas of devotion. These themes are poetically illustrated in *The Summoning World (Studio Angel)* (2024), a large-scale painting that blends the artist's studio with a serene landscape, populated by a single, reclining angel. Chambers identifies this angel as Gabriel, of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, referencing the long tradition of angels functioning as messengers. Often acting as divine intermediaries bearing important news or a spark of inspiration, the figure of the angel has appeared for centuries across religious texts, literature, and art history—from the work of Leonardo Da Vinci to that of Kerry James Marshall. While Chambers' warm, yellow-orange tones in *The Summoning World (Studio Angel)* suggest the golden settings of Fra Angelico, the scene, which is hung with artworks in various states of completion, also recalls Henri Matisse's *The Red Studio* (1911). Astute viewers will note that some of the paintings depicted can be found hanging in the gallery exhibition. Here, Chambers places the painter in the role of the summoner, bringing images and objects into the material world from another realm.

Chambers also looks to the natural world as a space of devotion and replenishment. In his new *Thunderscape* (2024) series, the artist depicts minute figures amidst landscapes of rolling hills and colossal trees, with each canvas drenched in rich, vibrant color. These works in particular reveal the influence of Magical Realism in Chambers' practice—in naming the series, he envisioned a surreal vista, where the shadows from tree branches became lightning

bolts. In this world, the electrified landscape comes alive with sound, creating the titular thunderscape.

Chambers' *Thunderscapes* also feature flying kites, some tethered, others autonomous, racing through the skies. These kites recall those in the paintings in his exhibition *Leave Room for the Wind*, which opened at Lehmann Maupin New York in early 2024. Their presence in the *Thunderscapes* series suggests they have escaped those picture planes to enter new canvases; they function as avatars, for either the artist or the creative spirit, time traveling across exhibitions and bodies of work.

Throughout *Meraki*, Chambers expands his explorations of leisure and interiority begun in earlier exhibitions—from the mental and physical leisure seen in *Soft Shadows* (2022) to the kinetic leisure in *Leave Room for the Wind*. In *Meraki*, he finds a new site for the replenishment of personal interiority in devotion, considering the spiritual as well as the bodily and intellectual, painting beyond the figurative and capturing the psyche.



Dominic Chambers, *Thunderscape #2*, 2024

Dominic Chambers (b. 1993 St. Louis, MO; lives and works in New Haven, CT) creates vibrant paintings that simultaneously engage art historical models, such as color-field painting and gestural abstraction, and contemporary concerns around race, identity, and the necessity for leisure and reflection. Interested in how art can function as a mode for understanding, recontextualizing, or renegotiating one's relationship to the world, the artist sees painting as a critical and intellectual endeavor, as much as an aesthetic one. A writer himself, Chambers draws inspiration from literature, especially Magical Realism and the writing of W.E.B. Du Bois, particularly Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, and one of its central themes—the veil. A product of racial injustice that is a metaphorical lens through which Black bodies are observed and experienced, references to the veil appear throughout the artist's work, whether in large swaths of color that obscure his figures or in the recurring use of a raindrop motif as both an active and passive element in his canvasses.

Chambers sees color as a protagonist in his paintings that is as important to unlocking their meaning as his subjects, and his deft manipulation of the tension and interplay between contrasting colors gives his work a subtle electric charge. In his most recent series, *Leave Room for the Wind*, Chambers situates his subjects in vivid landscapes that evoke shifting, monochromatic dreamscapes, and reference the mutability of our environment. The richly-hued paintings in this body of work depict open fields saturated in primary hues of red, yellow, and blue. Many of these scenes are populated by figures flying kites—a profoundly domestic activity pursued solely for its own sake, unconnected with external recognition or reward. In these works and throughout his oeuvre, Chambers proposes that enjoyment, stillness, or wonder can act as a gateway to private life and reminds us that leisure and recreation are critical to replenishing our own interiority.

Chambers received his B.F.A from Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, Milwaukee, WI in 2016, and his M.F.A. from Yale University School of Art, New Haven, CT in 2019. Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St. Louis, MO (2023); Tephra Institute of Contemporary Art, Reston, VA (2022); Lehmann Maupin, New York, NY (2022); The August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Pittsburgh, PA (2020); Luce Gallery, Turin, Italy (2020); The Millitzer Studio and Gallery, St. Louis, MO (2017); and the Residential Gallery, Des Moines, IA (2017). Select group exhibitions featuring his work include *Public Private*, Pond Society, Shanghai, China (2023); *When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting*, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town, South Africa (2022); *Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami's Collection*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL (2022); *Black Bodies, White Spaces: Invisibility & Hypervisibility*, Green Family Foundation, Dallas, TX (2021); *Realms of Refuge*, Kavi Gupta, Chicago, IL (2021); *Art Finds a Way*, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL (2020); *Synchronicity*, Roberts Projects, Los Angeles, CA (2020); *Abstractions of Black Citizenship: African American Art from Saint Louis*, Hedreen Gallery, Seattle University, Seattle, WA (2020); *Painting Is Its Own Country*, Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, Charlotte, NC (2019); *Chambers & Weinberg*, Hawthorn Contemporary, Milwaukee,

WI (2019); *Again, Always*, Green Hall Gallery, Yale University, New Haven, CT (2019); *Between Two Worlds*, Band of Vices, Los Angeles, CA (2019); *Interwoven*, Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York, NY (2018); *Water & Dreams*, The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI and Chicken Coop Contemporary, Portland, OR (2017); *NOW Figuration*, Portrait Society Gallery of Contemporary Art, Milwaukee, WI (2017); *Bridge Work 02: From Memory to Metaphor*, Arts + Literature Laboratory, Madison, WI (2017); *Post Mode 2.0*, John Fonda Gallery, Baltimore, MD (2016); *Bridge Work 02: From Memory to Metaphor*, The Pitch Project Gallery, Milwaukee, WI (2016); *Post Mode*, NYSRP Gallery, Brooklyn, NY (2015); *Final Exhibition*, Yale Norfolk School of Art, Norfolk, CT (2015); *Deconstructing the Local*, MIAD Galleries, Milwaukee, WI (2014); *Progress*, Contemporary Art Gallery, St. Louis Community College – Florissant Valley, St. Louis, MO (2013); and *Varsity Art XVIII*, Art Saint Louis, St. Louis, MO (2013).

Chambers' work is in a number of private and public collections, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (promised gift); Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA; Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA (promised gift); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels, Belgium; Xiao Museum of Contemporary Art, Rizhao, China.

Chambers is the recipient of the Robert Reed Drawing Scholarship, Yale University, New Haven, CT (2018); Ellen Battell Stoeckel Fellowship, Yale Norfolk School of Art (awarded through Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design) (2015); and the Varsity Art XVIII Award, St. Louis Community College – Florissant Valley, St. Louis, MO (2014). He has completed residences at the New York Studio Residency Program, Brooklyn, NY (2015), and the Yale Norfolk School of Art, Norfolk Historic District, CT (2015).



**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.

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