



Pieter Vermeersch. *Untitled*, 2024. Printed canvas, aluminum frame (6 panels). 115 x 149 x 300 inch. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

PIETER VERMEERSCH

(((()))

January 11 – February 19, 2025

Perrotin is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Pieter Vermeersch, who returns to the New York gallery after five years. Often working in large-scale spatial interventions, he creates immersive environments that interact with the space he is exhibiting in. This new exhibition extends his ongoing exploration of materiality, time, space and color, incorporating gradient paintings on canvas, semi-precious stones, and silkscreen techniques.

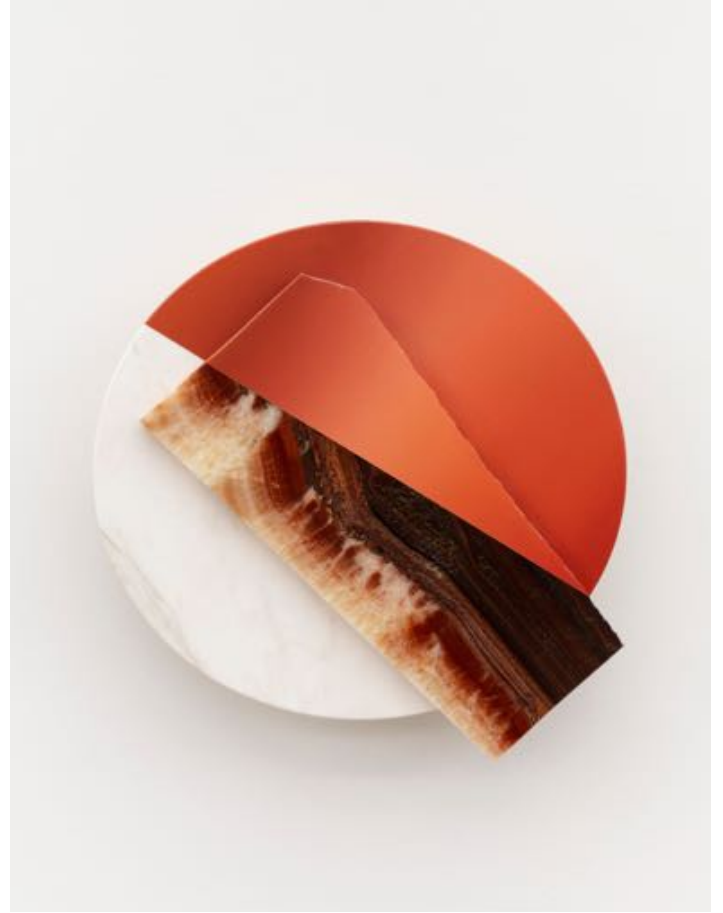
Painting, both as it is made and as it is then later experienced fascinates Pieter Vermeersch: through an initial awareness in the onlooker as aesthesis to its reception as painting. Today, painting can remain a powerful conveyer, it engages us with both our internal world in thought and emotion, and our external physical embodied experience of the world. It engages us in an exchange, a back and forth, between the object—the material support with its layer of applied paint—and the onlooker. The subject of painting is conveyed in Vermeersch's work not as the simple received ideas of a tradition of visual language or the gestural expressions of subjectivity, but something new within what we recognize as painting. That we recognize this work as painting, however unfamiliar this painting may turn out to be, makes it an even more compelling experience.

The exhibition scenography is precise, actively inviting the onlooker to move through the galleries as a passage: the architecture of the space and the works inside it combine, folding together discrete works of different scales and contrasting materials.

Vermeersch's particular methodology and the viewer's experience of the works are not in direct conceptual correspondence as they usually are when considering more familiar studies of color in painting of say the 1960s. The finely graduated, diffuse color and smooth, immaculately rendered oil surface is the result of a painstaking procedure of reproducing in paint photographic images of light and spatial conditions falling across a flat surface. It is a demystified, entirely comprehensible process, unlike the exuberant, and sublime, effect of the paintings. The evident contradiction between objective making and viewing is one of the many productive aporias arising in this exhibition. The oil paintings on canvas here all feature a tonally lighter horizontal at the vertical mid-point of the canvas. The color radiates unevenly, recalling the ethereal spatial effects of light at either low levels or high intensities. The larger paintings are immersive, their height at over 90 inches well above the onlooker's own height.



Pieter Vermeersch. *Untitled*, 2024. Silk screen print on Agate. 17 x 16 x 2 inch. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.



Pieter Vermeersch. *Untitled*, 2024. Oil on marble stones. 17 x 16 x 2 inch. Photographer: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Color is a fugitive substance: it is as challenging to define through language as it is through experience. We are confronted with the phenomena of color beyond adequate description in language, as is the space and time of geology and the cosmos beyond our human comprehension. Screen printed images, across the surface of Agate, marble stone, or calcified wood bring unconceivable quantities of time in collision with the temporal present of now. The universe is over 14 billion years old, our own planet formed around 4.5 billion years ago: cosmic and geological time scales. The presence of such materials as supports for painting or printing is here a trace of the artist's and our own acutely brief temporality; focusing, or inviting, the chaos of such cosmic scale into comparative view.

The two large, loosely gestural works in the exhibition are at first glance expressionistic; they are in fact screen printed enlargements of a doodle made on a small sheet of paper; they now defy gravity in the imposing form of their new size. Seen from distance, this image has a coherence visually that on approaching gradually

dissolves as screen dots that comprise the image are revealed. The image becomes porous, a vibration, losing in nearness its apparent solidity. Other works are positioned in front, establishing something like wall sized collages—a marble slab, oil paintings, semi-precious stones, a section of calcified wood. Dematerialization evoked by the screen dots representing the surface of the agate evacuates gravity: on this object that is dense with both gravity and time.

Painting as such has not been exhausted, as was anticipated, but has been revived by Vermeersch's experimentations. The modernist evolution of painting within the western canon—a one directional vector—is no longer the point. To Vermeersch, the experience of painting is still a powerful sensory and philosophical encounter, but one that is rooted in a desire to work with the contradictions of perception and matter, temporality and space, and the resulting beauty that through painting is released.

- David Rhodes