

Emma McIntyre *Among my swan*

March 25–May 10, 2025
5–6/F, H Queen's,
80 Queen's Road Central,
Central, Hong Kong



Emma McIntyre, *White chalk south against time*, 2024.
© Emma McIntyre. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

Painting, like a stage set, is worldbuilding in a contained space. I've long been interested in painting's connection to theatre; the drama, the sets, the mood, the lighting, protracted movement through emotional registers.... Theatre also relates to my interest in truth and deception in painting. Suspension of disbelief, a "higher being" as guide, painting as a kind of magic—which in turn relates to alchemy.

—Emma McIntyre¹

David Zwirner is pleased to announce an exhibition of paintings by New Zealand-born and Los Angeles-based artist Emma McIntyre at the gallery's Hong Kong location. This is McIntyre's first solo show in Asia and her second exhibition with David Zwirner, following *An echo, a stain* (2023), a solo presentation of her work at the gallery's East 69th Street location in New York.

McIntyre creates vivid abstractions imbued with chromatic and gestural energy. Made with oils and unconventional substances like oxidized iron, her instinctual yet deeply considered works explore the

¹ The artist in conversation with the gallery, February 2025.

alchemical possibilities of the painted medium and expand traditional understandings of landscape and the natural world. The artist's practice is protean and rhizomatic; each painting shares its roots with the ones before and after it, enacting an endlessly transformative system of generation and discovery.

When painting, McIntyre invokes the element of chance from the outset; she begins by pouring pigment from above, letting her colors pool, splash, and diffuse across the canvas. From there, she gradually builds up her surface with layers of spontaneous and atmospheric mark making, initiating a sensitive call and response between the artist's hand and the organic predilections of her chosen materials. McIntyre pairs her extemporaneous modes of creation with a repertoire of themes and compositional strategies gleaned from a close study of art history, synthesizing a remarkable range of impulses and motifs into a fresh, unbridled mode of painting that is entirely her own.

The show in Hong Kong, *Among my swan*, shares its title with a 1996 album by the band Mazzy Star that has inspired McIntyre; moreover, it alludes to the depictions of swans and cranes that often surface in her work and were also recurrent motifs for artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Sigmar Polke. With their elegant, curlicued necks, McIntyre's avians act as historical and mythical harbingers as well as tools of spatial orientation that signify the presence of open air and endless waters.

Building on McIntyre's ongoing material and conceptual investigations, the paintings in *Among my swan* share a central focus on the transformation of images and mediums. The artist situates her paintings in a theatrical context in which space is rendered much like a stage set—a landscape built up from overlapping layers that collapse various locations and perspectives, both real and imagined, onto the same picture plane. Several of the works on view feature striations of poured paint that create an energetic yet diaphanous visual effect; these stark linear markings also provide an analogue to the stage curtain, which reveals and conceals in equal measure. The paintings on view take as their launching point the 1979 essay "The Wisdom of Art" by literary theorist Roland Barthes, which analyzes the work of Cy Twombly along a schema of elements borrowed from Greek drama—fact, accident, outcome, surprise, and action—that similarly shape the contours of McIntyre's creative process.

Other works are accented with patterns or borders made from unexpected materials: McIntyre creates rasterlike dots using the imprint of bubble wrap, for example, and repurposes a cut radicchio into a stamp that leaves behind a blossoming floral design. The resulting compositions provide an unorthodox path toward painterly abstraction—one that is rooted in textiles, craft, and domestic and interior spaces. As the artist remarks: "Any idea of 'pure' abstraction is destroyed the moment I pick up a tube of paint. Pigments are made up of the world itself—the tube in my hand may contain blackened bones, crushed precious metals, the excretion of beetles, dirt, among many other things.... As these paintings develop, each is suggestive of a distinct environment or weather system, like little worlds within a larger ecosystem. They move through atmospheric space, cloud formations, watery environments, dirt, dust, domestic realms, wallpaper, through to earthly and almost hellish scenes. I aim to complicate abstraction, and my interest in landscape feeds into that."²

Emma McIntyre (b. 1990) was born in Auckland, New Zealand. After graduating from Auckland University of Technology in 2011, she received an MFA from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, in 2016 and a second MFA from ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California, in 2021. In 2019 she received a Fulbright Graduate Award. McIntyre is a founding board member of the cooperative gallery Coastal Signs, Auckland.

² Ibid.

Recent solo exhibitions of McIntyre's work include *Objects or Vapours*, Coastal Signs, Auckland (2024); *Pearl Diver*, Château Shatto, Los Angeles (2023); *Madonna of the Pomegranate*, Coastal Signs, Auckland (2022); and *Up bubbles her amorous breath*, Air de Paris, Romainville, France (2022).

In 2023, work by the artist was included in L'Almanach 23, the fourth edition of the biennial held at Le Consortium, Dijon, France.

An echo, a stain, a solo exhibition of McIntyre's work, was held at David Zwirner, New York, in 2023. In 2024, David Zwirner announced the representation of the artist in collaboration with Château Shatto, Los Angeles.

McIntyre lives and works in Los Angeles.

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