

Capitain Petzel

Ross Bleckner

It Used to Be

11 September – 18 October 2025

Opening

11 September, 6–10 pm

Artist Talk

Ross Bleckner in conversation with Kirsty Bell

13 September, 2 pm

Capitain Petzel is pleased to announce *It Used to Be*, Ross Bleckner's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

The title of the exhibition implies a contemplation of things past and transitory states – what lingers at the threshold between form and void, presence and absence, of what used to be. It primes us for an experience that is at once elegiac and reflective, exemplary of the artist's delicate approach to painting and the construction of images.

Bleckner often treats organic forms with an optical softness, blurring their edges until they seem to hover in light. These motifs appear as distilled essences, rather than literal studies. Plants in his work often dissolve into luminous bodies or patterned repetitions, their physical specificity replaced by an atmospheric presence. Rain, when it emerges, tends to take on the form of vertical drips, scattered droplets, or hazy veils of paint. Georgia O'Keeffe famously insisted that her floral paintings were about the flower itself, not encoded symbolism, despite widespread interpretation. Bleckner, similarly, abstracts floral forms until they become apparitions – vehicles for memory, loss, and light. He layers paint, erases, and builds surfaces that retain the ghost of form yet evoke something spectral, symbolic, and deeply emotional.

Over time, Bleckner's visual language has evolved, while remaining committed to the exploration of human vulnerability and transformation. His more recent works continue to use abstract forms and ethereal light effects to convey a sense of otherworldliness through reduced composition, where a single body hovers on a monochrome background, as in his recent *Sunset* paintings. In the exhibition, we encounter an array of canvases, both monumental and intimate in terms of format. This dense display of images can be seen as a cross-section of Bleckner's practice, which treats the canvas almost like a space for meditation, allowing the viewer to immerse themselves in luminous fields and reflective surfaces. Here abstraction is used to intensify emotional experience, and viewers are drawn into Bleckner's compositions, which shimmer and dissolve, much like experience itself.

Ross Bleckner emerged in the 1980s New York art scene, gaining recognition for his distinctive canvases that often incorporate repetition, blurring, and subtle layering of light and shadow. His work functions as poetic visual mourning, commemorating fleeting moments, fragility and impermanence. To this day, he is the youngest artist to receive a retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, at the age of 45. The artist's recent exhibitions include the Neues Museum Nürnberg; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin; Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; L.A. County Museum, Los Angeles; Kunstmuseum Luzern; and Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern.