

Billy Childish

keep mojave weird

Lehmann Maupin, New York

January 8 – February 28, 2026

Opening reception with artist: January 15, 6-8PM; poetry reading: 7PM



Billy Childish, *where we traveled*, 2025

Lehmann Maupin presents *keep mojave weird*, a suite of new works by acclaimed British painter, writer, and musician Billy Childish. In his newest series, which encompasses both landscape and portrait paintings, Childish depicts the western United States in scenes from California—from the Mojave Desert and Joshua Tree to lush Lake Tahoe. *keep mojave weird* closely follows Childish's recent exhibition *Billy Childish: the becoming unbecoming* at Yi Space in Hangzhou, China, which closed in late 2025. During the opening reception in New York, Childish will stage a reading from his latest collection of selected poetry, *The Uncorrected Billy Childish (only poets piss in sinks)*, Tangerine Press/L-13 2026. The reception will be held on January 15th, from 6-8PM, with the poetry reading beginning at 7 PM. Two chapbooks of new poetry exclusive to this event will also be available.

Based in Kent, England, Childish's artistic practice is wide ranging and prolific. In addition to painting, the artist moves seamlessly between poetry and prose, punk rock, blues, and folk music, photography, multiples, and printmaking. Over the course of his decades-long career, he has published 5 novels and more than 40 volumes of confessional poetry, as well as over 170 LPs. Childish's oil paintings are highly recognizable and often characterized by their striking immediacy. The artist begins each work by sketching the underlying composition in charcoal before moving into his signature range of vibrant and earth-toned oil palettes. His subjects are frequently drawn from his immediate environment—the North Kent landscape, members of his family—but can also derive from further afield, drawing on personal, philosophical, and spiritual concerns, including scenes from the Austrian Alps, the Pacific Northwest, or historical photographs. Seen through Childish's lens, these subjects are rendered at their most essential, appearing timeless and permanent.

keep mojave weird features a new series of paintings inspired by a road trip the artist took with his family during the summer of 2025. This body of work focuses on imagery from California, particularly the landscapes of the Mojave Desert, Joshua Tree, and Lake Tahoe. The expansive subject matter gives Childish

room to work on a grand scale, showcasing his particular talent for creating sublime cohesion within each composition. Throughout the exhibition, he compresses large swaths of the Sierra Nevada mountain range onto a single canvas, while images from Joshua Tree of massive rock formations and bare expanses of desert are contained in one or two panels. Rendered on an even smaller scale, *mono lake (version)* (2025) portrays the titular lake in Mono County, CA. The lake is a saline soda lake with exceptionally alkaline water—formed at least 760,000 years ago, its high pH, hypersalinity, and mineral content creates a unique ecosystem and large, otherworldly rock formations. Childish's depiction distills this unusual environment, evoking an ancient landscape nestled beneath a ring of mountains.

A selection of portraits permeate the show, including images of the artist himself and his children and wife in various Californian settings. These works recall family photos taken on a road trip, and each composition functions as both personal documentation of the family's journey and a timeless portrait of figures and landscape. In *beneath trees, yuba river* (2024), Childish's children stare out from under reaching tree branches. At once loose and precise, the work captures the figures at the river's edge, momentarily frozen amidst the ceaseless flow of the natural world rushing around them.

The works in *keep mojave weird* occupy a space that is both contemporary and eternal, where each landscape feels familiar yet remote. As a whole, the exhibition presents Childish's vision of a journey across the American West. From soaring mountain ranges, to arid desert, to verdant lakes, each image offers a narrative vignette that feels at once personal and universal.

Billy Childish (b.1959, Chatham, Kent, United Kingdom) is known for his introspective, autobiographical, and deeply emotional paintings, writing, and music. After leaving secondary school at age 16, Childish worked at the Naval Dockyard in Chatham as an apprentice stonemason. Initially denied an interview to the local art school, he produced hundreds of drawings that gained him entry to London's Saint Martin's School of Art. Childish's defiance of authority led to his eventual expulsion from art school in 1981. Since then, Childish has gained something of a cult status worldwide, writing and publishing several novels and more than 40 volumes of confessional poetry, recording more than 170 LPs, and painting several hundred works. Through all of these disciplines, Childish addresses social, political, and personal issues such as war, protest, his turbulent childhood, and his struggles with addiction. While his confessional poetry and music explore these issues with startling honesty, Childish's paintings are more subtle. His subjects are often drawn from his environment or are people he knows or admires: birch forests, self-portraits, a lone figure in a pastoral English landscape, and his wife as a reclining female nude. Childish works quickly and intuitively, making spare marks on raw canvas that leave much of it visible. He identifies with artists who worked outside a group or movement, intrigued by their outsider roles in society, such as Vincent van Gogh, Kurt Schwitters, and Edvard Munch. Labeling himself a

“radical traditionalist,” Childish has a reverence for traditional oil painting yet has resolutely resisted any connection with a particular group or artistic movement.

Childish attended Medway College of Design, Kent in 1977 and Saint Martin's School of Art, London in 1978. Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at He Art Museum, Guangdong, China (2024); Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate, UK (2023); Lehmann Maupin, New York, NY (2022), London (2022), and Seoul (2020); Neugerriemschneider, Berlin, Germany (2018); Villa Schöningen, Berlin, Germany (2017); Goss-Michael Foundation, Dallas, TX (2017); Rochester Art Gallery, Kent, United Kingdom (2016); Opelvillen Rüsselsheim, Frankfurt, Germany (2016); White Columns, New York (2010); and the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2010). Select group exhibitions featuring his work include *Billy Childish, Franz Gertsch, Alex Katz*, Galleria Monica de Cardenas, St. Moritz, Switzerland (2018); *Future Seasons Past*, Lehmann Maupin, New York, NY (2015); *The Islanders*, Galerie Mikael Anderson, Copenhagen, Denmark (2015); *BILLY CHILDISH, HARRY ADAMS and EDGEWORTH JOHNSTONE: Our Friend Larionov*, Pushkin House, London (2014); *Paintings Sweet Paintings*, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aache, Germany (2014); and *British Art Show 5*, City Art Centre, Edinburgh (2000).



**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 throughout Asia and Europe.

New York

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