

Merlin James - Arrivals

Chris Sharp Gallery is pleased to present the first Los Angeles solo exhibition of the Glasgow-based painter, Merlin James.

Merlin James is known for making seemingly heterogenous, mostly small-scale paintings, which present everything from architecture to landscape to scenes of sexual intimacy to so-called 'pure' abstraction. What he makes is indivisible from the way he makes it, starting from how the basic stretcher is put together, to the kinds of 'support' used, and the materials applied. These are liable to feature – in addition to paint – such things as human hair, ash and sawdust from the artist's studio floor.

The work is characterized by a consummate synthesis of James's expansive engagement in the history of western painting with his own personal production. If there is anything seemingly anachronistic about his fetishization of the history of painting, it is because he conceives the latter not as an inevitable linear progression but rather as a florilegium of subjects and objects, supports and marks, styles, genres and imageries, typified as much by omissions and aberrations as by monolithic coherence. His methodology is closer to excavation than construction, the paintings often feeling more discovered or revealed than necessarily built up and cumulative, even if James is paradoxically doing both things at once.

For his exhibition at Chris Sharp Gallery, James will present a broad selection of paintings from the past twenty years, dating as far back as 2004 and up through 2022. The tenor of the work ranges from the moody and elegiac, with depictions of anonymous buildings and landscapes in muted tones, to the more humorous and animated, as in the quasi-abstract portrayal of an airport baggage carousel (the eponymous *Arrivals*, 2007-08) and small, action-packed abstractions. In every case, a persistent and un-locatable mystery hangs over all, as if everything – the object, image and even the paint itself – were issuing from a great distance while being there right in front of our eyes.

Merlin James (b. 1960, Cardiff) is a painter based in Glasgow, Scotland. He received his Honors BA at the Central School of Art, London, in 1982, and his MA in painting at the Royal College of Art, London, in 1986. James has also written extensively on art, and curated exhibitions, several at his own space 42 Carlton Place, in Glasgow. James has exhibited within the UK and internationally since the 1990s. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Anton Kern Gallery, New York (2022), the Philadelphia Art Alliance (2022), Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York (2020), and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin (2021). His work is included in the collections of the Tate, London, UK; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France; Dallas Museum of Art and San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China; National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; and OCT Boxes Museum, Shunde, China. The artist's first major monograph, published by Durer Editions, has just been released.



Merlin James

Piper and Pom-pom, 2007

Acrylic on canvas

13 3/8 x 19 7/8 inches

34 x 50.5 cm



Merlin James

Green, Blue and Grey Composition, 2009

Acrylic and sawdust on canvas

15.5 x 18 inches

39.4 x 45.7 cm



Merlin James
Windmill, 2002-11
Acrylic on canvas
27 x 30.5 inches
68.6 x 77.5 cm



Merlin James

Glass, 2018-19

Acrylic and mixed materials

9.5 x 11 inches

24.1 x 27.9 cm



Merlin James
Bridge, 2014
Acrylic on canvas
18.875 x 21.25 inches
48 x 54 cm



Merlin James

Between the House and the Studio, 2019

Acrylic and mixed materials

34.75 x 24.75 inches

88.3 x 62.9 cm



Merlin James
Waterside Buildings, 2008
Acrylic on canvas
18.5 x 19.25 inches
47 x 49 cm



Merlin James
Untitled, 2006
Acrylic and mixed materials
32.5 x 26.375 inches
82.5 x 67 cm



Merlin James

Yellow, 2016

Acrylic on canvas

25.25 x 18.125 inches

64 x 46 cm



Merlin James

Green, 2007-09

Acrylic and mixed materials on
canvas

17 1/8 x 25 3/4 inches

43.5 x 65.5 cm



Merlin James

Night, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

20 1/2 x 23 3/8 inches

52 x 59.5 cm



Merlin James

Arrivals, 2007-08

Acrylic and mixed materials on canvas

25 5/8 x 26 5/8 inches

65 x 67.5 cm



Merlin James

Red, 2007-12

Acrylic and mixed materials on canvas

19 1/8 x 20 7/8 inches

48.5 x 53 cm



Merlin James

Mirror, 2004/22

Acrylic on canvas

12 5/8 x 15 inches

32 x 38 cm