

ZOE MCGUIRE

CAMBIUM

March 17 - May 6, 2023

Gaa Projects Cologne

Gaa Gallery is pleased to present *Cambium*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Zoe McGuire, opening on March 17 with a public reception from 5 - 8 pm and remaining on view through May 6, 2023.

Named after the cellular layer of a tree's trunk that annually produces bark and new wood, *Cambium* situates the viewer within vibrant landscapes based on contemporary scientific research on the connectedness of ecosystems. As the cambium links the tree to its inner and outer worlds, this exhibition finds McGuire examining and building visual connections to phenomena that are difficult to see. In her paintings, McGuire explores the intertwined lives of plants, animals, and fungi with ecosystems. In *Cambium*, she highlights the symbiosis, care, and social aspects of each forest entity in the exchange of nutrients and resources and the collaborative response of the forest in the face of changing environmental forces.

Pairing this work of visualizing nature through physiological phenomena, McGuire draws from art historical legacies of abstraction, adornment, and spirituality. The paintings in this exhibition result from a transdisciplinary approach to painting, bringing together a myriad of influences while also relishing in the directness of painting and drawing, sensing and making. McGuire's practice is one of intuition and exploration. Through painting, she observes the wonder of the forest by collapsing the demarkation of individual cells, bodies, trees, and forests. The tree is the forest, and the forest is the tree. In McGuire's work, both are individuals and more than their singular selves. In such a way, McGuire creates landscapes of a suspended and non-specific time. The scientific and spiritual, historical and contemporary, find themselves in dialogue. The past is present, and the present moves and flows between tenses.

Using oil paint on canvas and pastel on paper, McGuire fuses the visual patterning of art Nouveau's sinuous forms, the sublime wonder and peril of Hudson River School painting, and the spiritually oriented abstraction of the Transcendental Painting Group. Possessing luminosity and a radiant use of light, her work also draws influence from the refined geometry of stained glass rose windows found in churches and cathedrals. Providing the conceptual underpinnings of her recent work, McGuire has been drawn to early photographic studies of cellular growth in trees and plants. Zooming in and out, between micro and macro, her compositions are comprised of atmospheric vistas, physical interchange, and molecular transformation. Oil and pastel flow through and atop each other, offering a meditative and synesthetic convergence of image, movement, color, and material. Often divided into sections of twos and threes- at the top is the canopy, the sky and below the roots and earth. In between are the interstices and middle grounds. The landscape, which is typically rendered horizontally across the history of landscape painting, is converted into vertical space. This inversion of the horizon creates a kind of window, a reference to architecture, stacking and prioritizing isolated aspects of the landscape into one view. Through expansion and contraction, these unique parts become symbolic forms woven together to create tiered and multi-level vistas. McGuire builds landscapes within landscapes, collaging and rearranging small parts to build a harmonious whole.

Through vibrant uses of color and operatic renderings of surreal landscapes, McGuire pays homage to the tree, the forest, and offers an expanded view of the inner workings of the lives of plants. The works in *Cambium* read as narratives or sets absent of written human language in favor of musicality and movement. Producing psychological spaces that mimic organic processes, McGuire creates sites of transcendence. Extending into a place of transmutation and connection between the grounding architectural forms with the hybrid landscapes, the paintings form theatrical celestial worlds. Through bold compositions, subtle tonal ranges, and shifts in scale between the paintings and works on paper, McGuire offers intimate and immersive spaces that address both the smallness of individual cells and the enormity of the cosmos. Together and within each work, we find a constant exchange of perspectives. Multiple horizon lines pulse alongside one another, punctuated by circular forms- earth, planets, suns, moons, and unnamed orbs serving as points of orientation.

One could view *Cambium* as a kind of love letter to the forest, an ode to the sanctity of trees. McGuire's paintings are tangible after images, the searing impressions of the sun and the vibrational forms we see when we close our eyes.

Zoe McGuire (b. 1996, Albany, NY) is a Brooklyn-based artist whose work is comprised of vibrant oil paintings and charcoal and pastel drawings. McGuire received her Bachelor of Arts in 2018 from Skidmore College where she studied art history. Recent solo exhibitions include *Sacred Ecologies*, Another Gallery, New York, NY, and *Intersect* Palm Springs, Gaa Gallery, Palm Springs, CA. McGuire's work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions including, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, Taymour Grahne Projects, and Moosey Art in London, UK; Kutlesa Gallery, Goldau, Switzerland; WOAW Gallery, Hong Kong; *Marinaro*, Monica King Contemporary, and Vanderplas Gallery, in New York, NY; *The Boiler*, Deanna Evans Projects, and *Trestle* Gallery in Brooklyn, Gaa Gallery, Provincetown, MA; and *Contemporary Art Now*, Gaa Gallery, Ibiza, Spain, among others. McGuire was a finalist for the New American Painting's Emerging Artist Grant and was featured in their 2022 MFA print issue. Currently, McGuire is an MFA candidate at the Cranbrook Academy of Art.