

## Green Rays

When I was a child, riding my bike in circles around the cul-de-sac or walking to school, if I saw one magpie (sorrow) instead of two (joy) I would make myself go boss-eyed. The bird, hopping on the pavement in front of me or swooping down from a tree would blur into a multiple. Problem solved.

On holiday watching the sun disappear into the sea I always look out for the green ray, a meteorological phenomena I learnt about from an Eric Rohmer film of the same name. The green ray is a flash of colour that appears along the horizon line at the moment the sun sinks beyond it. The green lasts for barely a second. I saw it once, on a Greek Island with my husband and his parents. I was the only one who did. Whenever I think of the green ray, of seeing it, and then telling everyone, I feel a twinge of wrongdoing. How can I be sure that I didn't just make my eyes go crossed in the middle? Desperate for a colour, and then making it so. It happens easily and often enough without my doing; cobwebs when your retina breaks apart, the smudge of mustard over everything after reading in the sun. All of this and yet. I can still see it, clear as a photograph, that barely a second of green.

Whenever I hang out with painters I think of Frank O'Hara: 'I think I would rather be a painter, but I am not. Well.' I thought it standing in Choon Mi Kim's studio: Well.

Why? Because of colour. That twinge of wrongdoing; writing gives licence to fibbing. Painters have to show it, really show it.

There is a game that my friend Rose introduced me to over Christmas called Find the Cork. One person takes the cork from a champagne bottle and hides it in plain sight. As in, not behind or inside anything but right there: on the shelf or in the middle of the floor. On top of the television. Everyone else has to look for it. When someone spots the cork they silently sit down. This keeps happening until one person, still searching, remains. They are, of course, the loser. You would be amazed how long this point takes to get to. It's what the painters are up against.

Annie Dillard (who also looks out for the green ray) in her essay *Sight into Insight*, speaks of the surgeons who discovered how to perform safe cataract operations, giving sight to people who'd been blinded from birth. What they found was that once their patients could see they had no concept of space or depth. Things they could formerly identify with their mouths or their hands no longer made any sense. Of one case, a surgeon reported: 'I have found in her no notion of size, for example, not even within the narrow limits which she might have encompassed with the aid of touch. Thus, when I asked her to show me how big her mother was, she did not stretch out her hands but set her two index fingers a few inches apart.'

Vision, for the newly sighted, exists as pure sensation — impossible for those who've always had it to comprehend. When attempting to view the world in this way, as a dazzle of pure colour, standing before an orchard, Dillard fails. She writes, 'form is condemned to an eternal danse macabre with meaning: I couldn't unpeach the peaches.'

A bird splits in half on the pavement and we call it joy. Utterance is sight. The poet Eileen Myles called the poetry of New York School, of which O'Hara is included, 'chatty abstraction', a term I would steal for Kim's painting. Kim herself describes her paintings as 'like a living diary', so a private kind of chatting, but a chatting nonetheless. As too with chatting, there is a conversational immediacy to these works. A flurry of feeling. Flashes of green. This all-at-onceness lets the peaches, for a moment, remain unpeached. Trained in calligraphy, Kim makes the word the world: characters shift into gestures like a match being struck.

Where is the Champagne cork?

There.

- Hannah Regel

Choon Mi Kim  
ACID FRESSES  
September 23 - October

Works (left to right):

A Simple Shout, 2023  
Oil on Canvas  
160cm x 180cm

Green Rays, 2023  
Oil on Canvas  
170cm x 200cm

Islands, 2023  
Oil on Canvas  
140cm x 120cm

Open Loops, 2023  
Oil on Canvas  
180cm x 180cm

Choon Mi Kim (b. Incheon, South Korea) lives and works in London. Recent exhibitions *Away*, VINVIN, Vienna, Austria (2023); *Contingency, Part-1*, Des Bain, London, UK (2023); *Next* Christie's x GoodEye Projects, Christie's London, UK (2023); *Size Matters*, Proposition Studio Gallery, London, UK (2021); *Access*, Fu Qing Chinese Super Market, London, UK (2021); *Now That's What I Call Painting Vol.1*, Unit 4 Gallery, Hastings, UK (2020). Residencies include GoodEye Projects, London (2022) and *Residencia Corazon*, La Plata, Argentina (2021).