Emma McMillan | Invasives
Januray 20th - Feburary 17th, 2024

Enter the spotted lanternfly... The invasive species was first discovered on Staten Island in the dog days of summer 2020. Their overabundance in the Big Apple prompted government officials to encourage the on- sight annihilation by its citizens. This was a strategy of curbing the insect's further proliferation in the Northeast and - God forbid - into the western United States where they would likely wreak havoc on good old wine country.

Emma McMillan took a keen interest in the spotted lanternfly during her working tenure at the Whitney on Manhattan's west side. It was 2022 and as she toiled away at the waterfront institution, the bug bodies steadily piled up. She saw the insect's body, a mixture of yellow and black, exploded on concrete as the legs remain either precariously attached or else lost to the wind. Red-orange against black and white polka-dotted underwings are overlain with translucent brown spotted sheaths, which appear like lingerie as they barely obscure the flashier strata below. Wavering between tragedy and weird exuberance, their heterogeneous eruptions position the lanternfly as the ideal vehicle for mutation. With every "splat" the creature is born Anew!

Having felt like an alienated subject herself, McMillan's sympathies latched onto the condemned insect. Meandering about the diminutive corpses, she began photographing their splayed-out remains. The aftermath of this material reality comes to the artist after psychological interpretation of the resulting squashes, resulting in the conversion of pictures to illustrations. Drawing then yields to the painting process in which the bodies become strange forms of abstract patterning.

The drama of the spotted lanternfly plays out in accordance with McMillan's painterly touch. She isolates one subject on the canvas then goes in and builds upon it in layers. Each composition is constructed from a burnt sienna ground and pursued through wet-on-wet paint application. Alla-Prima allows for nonlinearity to enter the fold, where psychic and visual slippages emerge within the composition. McMillan habitually goes back into the painting to toggle with transparency and enact reductive methods. McMillan's palette is also critical to the visual description of the insect.

Here, natural pigments are set against choice
neons, which are lodged within each painting's anatomical elements. McMillan engages the fluorescence outside of the skeletal content, too, excited by the interplay of bright and dim passages. Symmetry and motion play larger roles in these seven paintings than in previous works. Likewise, McMillan pays specific attention to externality, modes of coming apart, and the operations of visual articulation

The story of the spotted lanternfly invasion is compelling and social, however, the growing remove from it reframes the issue entirely, as time naturally reconfigures perception. The room is charged with a distinctive pulse despite the subject's post-mortem status, functioning like a death knell. In continuously rendering the lanternfly, McMillan exercises care for the doomed thing.

-Reilly Davidson

Emma McMillan
Invasive , 2023
Oil on Linen
55" H x42" W
(EMCLN06)

Emma McMillan
Invasive, 2023
Oil on Linen
62" H x 45" W
(EMCLN02)

Emma McMillan
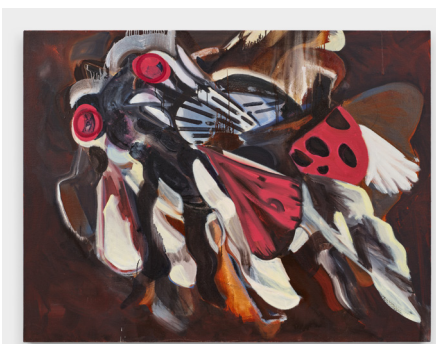*Invasive,* 2023
Oil on Linen
62" H x 45" W
(EMCLN03)

Emma McMillan
Invasive , 2023
Oil on Linen
55"H x 42"W
(EMCLN08)

Emma McMillan
Invasive, 2023
Oil on Linen
42" H x 55" W
(EMCLN05)

Emma McMillan
Invasive, 2023
Oil on Linen
42" H x 55" W
(EMCLN01)

Emma McMillan
Invasive, 2023
Oil on Linen
42" H x 55" W
(EMCLN04)

Emma McMillan (b. 1989, Atlanta, Georgia)
Lives and works in New York City, New York.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2023
Haruspex, PHILIPPZOLLINGER, Zürich, Switzerland
Invasives, Sebastian Gladstone, Los Angeles, CA
2021
Susanna, Paul Rudolph Heritage Foundation, New York, New York
2019
Project X, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, Georgia.
Édouard Montassut, Paris, France Bleu de Prusse
2018
Ornament and Crime, Lomex, New York, New York.
Liste Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland presented by Édouard Montassut, Paris
2017
Live Burial, Bad Reputation, Los Angeles, California.
2016
Hard Times, What?, Alyssa Davis Gallery, New York, New York.

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS
2023
& Now I've Said the Opposite of What I Mean, Shoot the Lobster, New York, New York
Becoming, COL Gallery, San Francisco, California
2022
Westward exposure, Westbeth Gallery, New York New York
Discard Phase with Lauren Burns Coady, Triest, Brooklyn New York
70th St., Colanagi Gallery, New York New York
Kollaborationen, MUMOK Vienna, Austria
A Somewhat Thin Line, In Lieu Gallery, Los Angeles California
2020
Saturn Hotel, Brooklyn New York Curated by Chris Viaggio
2019
Downtown Painting, Peter Freeman, Inc., New York, New York.
Wolfe Island, Canada Responsibility Fest, Kunstverein Braunschvieg, Braunschweig, Germany and FPBJPC
2018
An Art Exhibition, The Midwestern Society for Arts & Crafts, Detroit, Michigan
2017
Dollhouse of a Poem, Praterstrasse 32/308, Vienna, Austria
What Pipeline, Detroit, Michigan
2016
No Hope, No Fear, lnstituto Svizzero di Roma, Rome, Italy.
Skin of a Drum, Taylor Macklin, Zurich, Switzerland
Under the Volcano, Lomex, New York, New York

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS
Foundation, Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine
Portland Musuem of Art, Portland, Maine.

SELECTED PRESS
An interview with Alex Katz. Cultured Magazine, September 2021
Kat Herriman, "Back Draft : Emma McMillan" Guernica Magazine, September 2020
Dennis Zhou, "Emma McMillan at Atlanta Contemporary", Artfourm, December 2019.
Mara Hoberman, "Emma McMillan at Édouard Montassut", Artforum, April 2019.
Kat Herriman, "Emma McMillan at LOMEX", Artforum, March 2018.
Chris Viaggio, "Emma McMillan at Bad Reputation / Los Angeles", FlashArt, February 2018.