

1A Old Nichol Street
London E2 7HR

+44 74 5021 6874
gallery@ilenia.co.uk

www.ilenia.co.uk

Emil Michael Klein

Wall Painting

05 October – 18 November 2023

Private view: Wednesday 04 October 2023, 6-8pm

For the gallery's inaugural exhibition, Ilenia presents the first solo presentation of Emil Michael Klein in the UK – with a new body of work encompassing paintings, curtains and significantly a site-specific wall painting extending across the entirety of the gallery's west wall.

Primarily process-led, Emil Michael Klein's practice is defined by a meticulous exploration of painting as a medium. Bold and sparing, his compositions omit extraneous detail, instead looking to the specific alchemy of abstract colour on canvas to conjure emotive, physical and spatial resonances. In his ongoing series of *Line Paintings*, he begins by priming his ground in deep hues, which over the course of several months he intuitively builds upon with diaphanous layers of lighter paints. The resulting lines emerge indirectly amidst these chalky-hued expanses as mineralised seams of colour, where the painterly surface beneath has been left untouched. As in nature, Klein affects an oscillating topography, the network of veins appearing to emerge organically beyond the influence of human agency.

In this exhibition, Klein responds to the architecture of the gallery's new space at 1A Old Nichol Street, for which he has conceived a site-specific wall painting. The work initiates a reversal in process for the artist, whereby repeated broad brushstrokes of various blue and green hues are intentionally amassed to form an illusory chasm across the space. Through this work, Klein looks to the legacy of Colour Field Painting, eschewing action and gesture in favour of form and meticulous process to evoke the primordial or elemental experience of the medium. As in Colour Field Painting, the essential formal constraint of the intervention, using colour alone, conjures a dynamic transformation of the space itself. He has spoken of the historic ornamental use of painting to conceal 'poor walls'. By applying paint directly to its surface, Klein offers an alternative mode of seeing and in turn a renewed tension between the space and the viewer.

Set in dialogue with the wall painting are two monochromatic paintings and a raw linen canvas made as a bespoke curtain. Here, the singular presence of concentrated colour likewise mediates a fusion of texture and gesture. As with his *Line Paintings*, these two bodies of work counter traditional processes of image making: the paintings beginning with the demarcation of his signature around which paint is gradually accumulated, while the linen curtain represents their negative, with the artist's initials overlaid in graphic lettering directly onto the bare canvas. These inverse approaches to the pictorial plane mirror the evolving materiality of Klein's wider practice; deftly employing understated gesture to realise the capacity of formal resistance to generate physical and emotive tension.

Emil Michael Klein (b. 1982, Munich) studied at the Academy of Art and Design, Basel (2002-2005), and gained a Master's in visual arts at the École cantonale d'art de Lausanne (2013). He has exhibited internationally with institutional solo shows including *Darkotic*, Kunsthalle Zurich and *Emil Michael Klein*, Museum Im Bellpark, Kriens (both 2017). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions including *Stop Painting*, curated by Peter Fischli, Fondazione Prada, Venice (2021) and *Undisturbed Solitude* (curated by Chus Martinez), Kunsthaus Hamburg (2016). He lives and works in Zürich.