

Paul Lee's vocabulary possesses quiet force. His unspoken narratives investigate the meaning and conquest of desire, using a language that is and on the verge of absence—a mark via the form of a trace, a trace that wipes away any particular subjective resonance, appointing it in another form.

In Emerald, Lee's second solo exhibition at maccarone, new works evidence his ritualistic studio practice. With washcloths and towels cut up, hand sewn together and dyed with ink, the materials absorbing function — a mirror to the skin — is displaced. The gradual loss of a cell's increment is redefined by space and light, with desire punctuated by color. Suggesting a state of movement on and through these objects, within their layers of absence the viewer takes on, unravels and shares an object's space in a pure state. Lee is known for sculptures that reference the body while emitting a physical intimacy, yet these new larger works restate his consideration of the human tactile experience in an expanded domain. Lee's reconstructed tambourines reverberate scale and depth. Built up with basswood and paint on the instrument's skin-like surface, they address containment and the deliberate withholding of the object's usage. Lee's tambourines favor the ardent possibilities found in the image — with color, line and space, and a blissful sense of liberating something from its inherent content.

Lee's works are not the whole, but a portion; in their longing for completion, they touch upon key elements of our existence. With subtle symbolism, what Lee both hides and reveals about the body acts as its own political act, informed by the artist's generational history which time has not forgotten.

Paul Lee was born in London in 1974, and has lived and worked in New York since 2001. He was artist in residence at Chinati Foundation, Marfa, USA in 2007. Paul Lee's work has been included in the recent exhibitions Absentee Landlord, curated by John Waters, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA (2011-2012); Moon River (solo exhibition), Stuart Shave/Modern Art (2011); Flaca / Tom Humphreys, Portikus, Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany (2011); Eliminate, curated by John Waters, Alberta Merola Gallery, Provincetown, USA (2007); and The name of this show is not Gay Art Now, curated by Jack Pierson at Paul Kasmin, New York, USA (2006). Public collections include The Dallas Museum of Art, The Walker Art Center, RISD, and The Morgan Library.

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