

Une promesse que je veux résoudre / A promise I want to resolve

Carole Ebtinger

December 7 – January 25, 2025

Opening Saturday, December 7th 6–8pm

SARAH BROOK GALLERY

Gallery open hours:
Wed–Sat 12–5pm

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for all inquiries

Sarah Brook Gallery is thrilled to present *Une promesse que je veux résoudre / A promise I want to resolve*, the second exhibition of French artist Carole Ebtinger. The show opens on Saturday, December 7, and will be on view through January 25, 2025.

Standing before *Promesse IV*, you may see light flickering atop ruffled waters, streaming through leafy trees, or enshrining in gold, if for a moment, the pond's mottled floor. But what you feel—what it makes you feel—is harder to place, harder yet to name. The rise and fall of light and shade across the twelve paintings comprising Carole Ebtinger's *A promise I want to resolve* leads you toward the indescribable. Harnessing velocity, color, composition, and contrast, she renders interior experiences tangible, distilling all the intensity of emotion, sensation, and rumination in paint.

Unfastened from representation but still of this world, her forms evoke the phenomena of light and her palette, the natural world of verdant meadows, gardens, grottos, bogs, and forests. In *Promesse III*, where wispy olive, mauve, and indigo daubs congeal and disperse, and citrine-chartreuse washes dissolve in colorless incandescence, it's easy to think of water lilies. Yet, simply consigning her work to the enduring legacy of Claude Monet's impressionism misses the novelty of her mark-making and her formidable ability to move through the emotional registers—from solemnity to ecstasy, placidity to frenzy—in a single compositional frame without even one recognizable shape.

Rather than preserve the image of a particular place or vignette, Ebtinger reifies the volatility, malleability, and, at times, all-consuming nature of emotional states. Stirring miasmatic gestures are skewered by sudden vertical slashes, limpid pools of color are smeared, and feathery textural strokes are overrun by opaque Twombly-esque scrawl. Elsewhere, variegated pastel hues are engulfed by an ever-encroaching murkiness if not entirely subsumed by lush yet acerbic shadowplay. This rhythmic interplay between harmony and turmoil renders the abstractions indefinitely absorbing, enchanting even. Look away, and you may miss the light fade and flare as despair turns to delight. What are moods but moments of enchantment?

The dynamism of the work arises in part from the artist's bifurcated process, which balances chance and deliberate acts. Ebtinger begins by moving a mixture of pigment, water, and glue across the paper. Using a large brush, she follows her intuition to imagine an initial composition that is as free of intentionality and premeditation as possible. To maintain a level of urgency and spontaneity, she works on two sheets simultaneously, moving quickly back and forth between them before either can dry. In the second phase, she returns with fine brushes and pastels, shaping the image's final form by both embracing and resisting the underlying base. While the first stage happens quickly, the second may take several months.

Comparing this exhibition to her last in June 2023 reveals the artist's growing confidence in the intuitive aspects of her process. The heightened tension between restless and meticulous lines, between impassioned and refined gestures, affords the series its distinctive voice—a candor that is rigorously intimate, kinetic, and entirely original.

In this way, coming to the final painting, hung on the rear-facing wall in the back of the gallery, where a blazing white form floats like a fallen flower upon a night-dark lake, you see a lily belonging to no other but Ebtinger. And experience a feeling, however ineffable, that this mixture of pigment on paper alone could affect.

— *Tara Anne Dalbow*

Carole Ebtinger (b. 1995, Vietnam, raised in Strasbourg, France) received her BFA and MFA from La Cambre art institute in Brussels, Belgium. Solo exhibitions include Sarah Brook Gallery, Los Angeles; BOZAR, Brussels; and has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including Barbé Urbain Gallery, Gent; South Parade, London; and New Exhibitions, London. In 2021 she was awarded the Eeckman Art Prize by Art on Paper, Brussels. In January 2025 Ebtinger will attend Fores Project residency, London.