

Petzel

ROSS BLECKNER

Mashber

January 18 – March 9, 2024
520 W 25th Street

*“on a tuesday
its incredible to me
that you can breathe your last breath
on the same day
that someone else
somewhere
will curse the misery of a parking ticket
or laugh
until they cry”*

—Unknown Poet

Petzel is pleased to present *Mashber*, a selection of new paintings by New York-based artist Ross Bleckner. The show marks Bleckner’s third solo exhibition with the gallery, and will be on view from January 18 to March 9, 2024, at Petzel’s Chelsea location at 520 West 25th Street. Using floral motifs, modes of erasure, and abstract landscapes derived from brain scans, Bleckner stages a range of emotional allegories through stylistic, iconographic, and painterly conditions central to the artist’s practice.

Citing the Hebrew word “mashber” (מִשְׁבֵּר) in the title of the exhibition, often translated into English as “crisis,” these works represent an inquiry into the present, considering painting as a method of elliptical, temporal image-making to cycle and transmute emotional processes. Originally meaning “birthing chair,” a space of breach and beginning, “mashber” signals both danger and desire, the seat between life and death. This space of transformation invokes the German concept of “Weltschmerz” (“world grief”)—melancholy caused by the disparity between the way the world is and the way one wishes it to be.

Bleckner’s newest paintings locate manifold states of experimentation, distress, and quietude, and extend painting as an act of bearing witness. “Bleckner’s paintings are honest, to a fault about their condition, which is the condition of painting without trust,” writes the late Peter Schjeldahl. “This can be extremely moving, the surfaces seemed punished into songfulness. The best of them could make you weep, without knowing quite why.”

Bleckner’s titles are sometimes humorous (*Pretty/Pretty*), sometimes indulgent (*Deep Below Our Violence*), sometimes self-directing (*To Speak Lower*), sometimes admitting grief (*Afraid to Think About Death*), and at times resigned to cosmic irony (*You Will Not ‘Get Over It’*), yet always honest, working through their surfaces. *Mashber* presents a treatment of human feeling with curiosity, conviction, and reverence, revealing the truth of vulnerability in moments of crisis.

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About Ross Bleckner

Emerging as a prominent artist in New York during the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, Bleckner's paintings are an investigation of change, loss, and memory, often suggesting meditations on the body, health and disease, much like a memento mori. "The idea that the body is so perfect, until it's not perfect. It's a fragile membrane that separates us from disaster." His immersive paintings, whether pure abstraction of stripes or dots, or more representational renderings of birds, flowers, and brains, elicit a powerful hypnotic and dizzying effect.

To this day, Bleckner is the youngest artist to receive a midcareer retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, at the age of 45. His paintings can be found in many major museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art and in the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, as well as numerous exhibitions, including at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin; Reina Sofia, Madrid; L.A. County Museum, Los Angeles; Kunstmuseum Luzern, Luzern; and Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern.

Petzel Gallery is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Ricky Lee at ricky@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.