

Emma McMillan | *Madam Butterfly*
March 7th - April 19th, 2025

*Heavenly Hurt, it gives us –
We can find no scar,
But internal difference –
Where the Meanings, are –*

Emily Dickinson

The transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly is a process we call metamorphosis. At a certain point, the caterpillar encloses itself in a chrysalis, an intermediary stage that holds both what it was and what it will become. *Webster's Dictionary* describes metamorphosis as “a change of physical form, structure, or substance, especially by supernatural means,” though in nature, it happens as a matter of course.

McMillan's paintings work in a similar way—not as illustrations of transformation, but as transformations themselves. Her gestures—brushwork, scratches, scumbling—do not simply describe a butterfly; they enact its becoming. The studio is her chrysalis, a space where process overtakes intention, and one decision leads inevitably to the next. The resulting paintings are layered, luminous, and immediate, with a presence that recalls stained glass, not because of any symbolic weight, but because of how light moves through color.

In *Madam Butterfly*, the paintings shift between urgency and restraint, between sound and silence. They suggest that looking is not static, that what we see is always subject to change, and that the act of painting, like metamorphosis, is as much about shedding as it is about becoming.