

*soft crossing*

Magdalena Skupinska

13 March – 26 April 2025

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Maximillian William is pleased to present *soft crossing*, Magdalena Skupinska's fourth solo exhibition at the gallery. Skupinska's practice takes shape through the slow and meditative work of gathering, grinding, and layering – altered by time, steeped in the rhythms of growth and decay. Her works do not settle into stillness, but emerge from the earth, formed by the elements, taking pigment and texture from nature's own store.

Skupinska works with pigments in their most elemental form, turning to plant fibres, minerals, and organic matter that carry the imprint of their origins. In her hands, painting ceases to be confined to canvas and frame. Chamomile and turmeric settle into the surface, while ashwagandha and holy basil yield their quiet, earthen hues. Alkanet, rich and intense in its near-black tones, creates smooth, velvety expanses, while hibiscus, with its distinctive cracking texture, fractures as it dries. The work breathes with the pulse of its making.

Rooted in this material process, the compositions are landscapes and objects at once – embedded in the physical world, yet gesturing beyond it, towards something elemental and ancient. The textures bear the weight of time, of hands shaping and reshaping, of layers formed not only by the sweep of a brush but through touch, pressure, alchemy.

Laid out, supine atop elevated wooden structures, the artworks remain tethered to the earth, drawing the viewer downward into their plane. Seeing them requires a slight bow – a gesture of collecting, preparing, reverence. The body yields, the movement is deliberate. This shift in orientation alters the dynamic between viewer and work; it is no longer encountered at eye level but approached on its own terms. The paintings do not simply present themselves – they ask to be seen differently. Their surfaces unfold gradually, revealing shifts in depth, weight, and material memory.

Through sustained experimentation, Skupinska continues to refine a technique shaped entirely by the materials themselves, allowing their physical and chemical properties to dictate the work rather than imposing control. These natural substances - extracted, ground, and distilled from organic sources - are not inert materials but active agents within an evolving process. Their transformation is gradual, shifting from the moment they are mixed to when they dry, the surface forming and settling in a constant state of flux. Like sediment carried by water or earth shaped by wind, the works refuse fixity, embracing cycles of transformation, erosion, and renewal.

Perception here too is unstable, shifting with movement, light, and distance. The textured surfaces rise and dip, catching shadows and reflecting movement. As viewers navigate the space, their perspectives shift – there is no singular vantage point, no fixed horizon. The works resist passive viewing, instead requiring movement, proximity, and repeated engagement.

Rejecting the tradition of pictorial illusionism, Skupinska's works do not depict the landscape; they embody it. They exist within a material ecology, where process and environment dictate their evolution as much as the act of making itself. Here, painting is not a static object but an evolving entity – one that insists on attention, slowness, and an active gaze.

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The exhibition is accompanied by a publication, *Winterwashing*, featuring a text by writer and academic Rebecca May Johnson, whose words follow the rhythms of gathering, preparing, and making. She traces Skupinska's engagement with plants and pigments back to the traditions of food-making – the time-honoured work of harvesting by hand, of transforming what is fleeting into what lingers. A folk tale of colour and sustenance, of painting as a form of preservation and ritual.

**Magdalena Skupinska** (b. 1991, Warsaw, PL) is a London-based artist whose practice explores the material and conceptual entanglements between organic matter, landscape, and human intervention. Rooted in a process of research and experimentation, her work engages with the complex, often uneasy, relationship between natural and constructed environments.

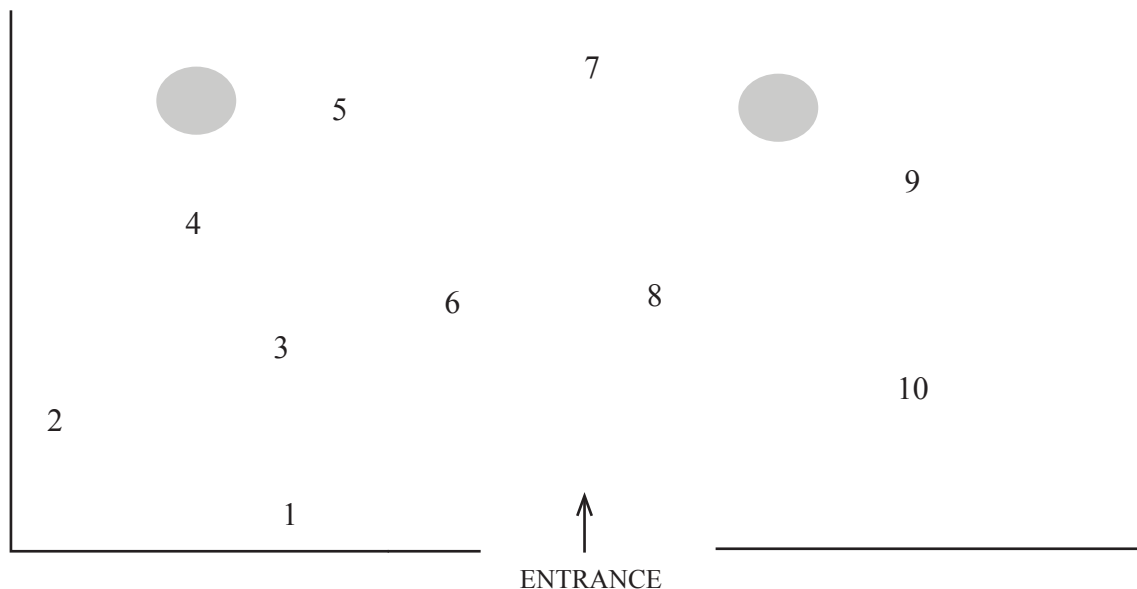
Working with plant-based pigments, minerals, and raw materials, Skupinska extends the lineage of Arte Povera and Minimalism, but with a focus on material agency and ecological consciousness. Her paintings resist containment, evolving through layering, absorption, and the slow transformation of organic elements over time. Through abstraction, she translates the rhythms of growth, erosion, and decay - inviting a sensory and tactile engagement with surface, colour, and texture.

At the core of her practice is an inquiry into how materials carry memory - of place, of process, of interaction. By allowing natural pigments to settle, bleed, and alter, her works embrace impermanence, reflecting both the fragility and resilience of the environments from which they emerge.

Skupinska completed her BA in Fine Art at Central St Martins, London and her MA in Painting at The Royal College of Arts, London. She has participated in residencies at Selebe Yoon, Dakar, Senegal; Fundación Casa Wabi in Oaxaca, Mexico; La Ira de Dios, Buenos Aires, Argentina and the Atlantic Center For The Arts. Her solo exhibitions include *Fertile Plate*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, USA (2023), *Blending Elements* (2022) and *Layú*, Maximillian William, London (2019); *DAMA*, Palazzo Saluzzo Paesana, Turin, Italy (2016) and *Elements of Silence*, Maximillian William, London (2015). Recent group shows include *Borrowed Landscapes* (2023), *The Haptic Eye: Part III – Pathways of Dexterity*, ArtCircle, curated by Mark Gisbourne (2021); *The Haptic Eye: Part II – Tactile Visions*, ArtCircle, curated by Mark Gisbourne (2020); *Tender Touches*, Open Space Contemporary, London curated by Huma Kabakcı and Anna Skladmann (2019); *Adventitious Encounters*, Open Space Contemporary, London curated by Huma Kabakcı and Anna Skladmann (2018).

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| <p>1 <i>Study I</i>, 2024<br/>Indigo, blue spirulina,<br/>turmeric and ashwagandha on wood<br/>16.2 x 42 cm<br/>6 3/8 x 16 1/2 in.</p> <p>2 <i>Nektar</i>, 2025<br/>Chamomile, alkanna tinctoria,<br/>ashwagandha, blue spirulina and paprika on wood<br/>32.1 x 32.1 cm<br/>12 5/8 x 12 5/8 in.</p> <p>3 <i>Mirth</i>, 2025<br/>Alkanna tinctoria, dragon's blood<br/>and turmeric on wood<br/>30.5 x 81 cm<br/>12 x 31 7/8 in.</p> <p>4 <i>Lucky</i>, 2025<br/>Beetroot, chamomile, arrowroot and<br/>alkanna tinctoria on wood<br/>25.4 x 50.6 cm<br/>10 x 19 7/8 in.</p> <p>5 <i>Still Sunny Spot</i>, 2025<br/>Chamomile and turmeric on wood<br/>30.4 x 81 cm<br/>12 x 31 7/8 in.</p> <p>6 <i>Cleo</i>, 2025<br/>Hibiscus, alkanna tinctoria, turmeric,<br/>blue spirulina, arrowroot and chamomile on wood<br/>30.5 x 81 cm<br/>12 x 31 7/8 in.</p> | <p>7 <i>Exhale</i>, 2025<br/>Chamomile, blue spirulina<br/>and turmeric on wood<br/>23.3 x 50.5 cm<br/>9 1/8 x 19 7/8 in.</p> <p>8 <i>Ancient Promise</i>, 2025<br/>Hibiscus, chamomile<br/>and alkanna tinctoria on wood<br/>30.3 x 71.2 cm<br/>11 7/8 x 28 in.</p> <p>9 <i>Embrace</i>, 2025<br/>Chamomile, alkanna tinctoria<br/>and paprika on wood<br/>51 x 122 cm<br/>20 1/8 x 48 in.</p> <p>10 <i>Untitled</i>, 2025<br/>Dragon's blood, turmeric<br/>and alkanna tinctoria on wood<br/>25.2 x 50.5 cm<br/>9 7/8 x 19 7/8 in.</p> |
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