

THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. ash), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, maple frame 30 x 40 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL
Untitled (Figueroa St. yellow atmosphere), 2024
Alkyd enamel on canvas, white oak frame
66 × 92 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. mystic dharma), 2024 Alkyd enamel on linen, walnut frame 36 x 48 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. interior whites), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, purple heart frame 66 x 92 inches





THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. the one with shapes), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, paduak frame 66 x 92 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL
Untitled (Figueroa St. new blue line), 2024
Alkyd enamel on linen, walnut frame
36 x 48 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. new dharma palette), 2024 Alkyd enamel on linen, walnut frame 36 x 48 inches



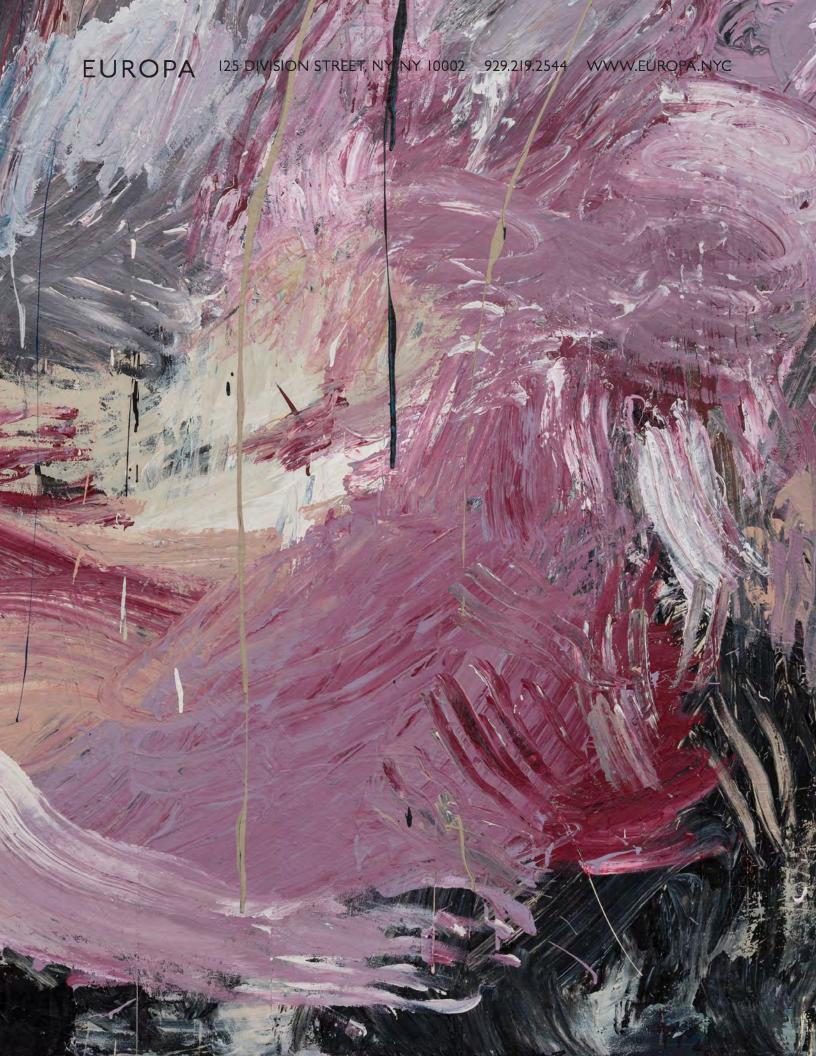
THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. second interior whites), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, sapele frame 66 x 92 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. santa Cruz), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, purple heart frame 66 x 92 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL
Untitled (Figueroa St. best new two hands), 2024
Alkyd enamel on canvas, padauk frame
66 × 92 inches





THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. hearts atmosphere), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, purple heart frame 66 x 92 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. black heart), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, white oak frame 66 x 92 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL
Untitled (Figueroa St. black top corners), 2024
Alkyd enamel on canvas, paduak frame
66 x 92 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. congo's card blue with green at top), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, walnut frame 30×40 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. interior whites, red), 2024 Alkyd enamel on linen 36 x 48 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. after white columns), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, walnut frame 30 x 40 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. rabbit ears), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, cherry frame 66 x 92 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. small grey heart), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, walnut frame 30 x 40 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. interior whites, black), 2024 Alkyd enamel on linen 36 x 48 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. first small hearts), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, walnut frame 30 × 40 inches



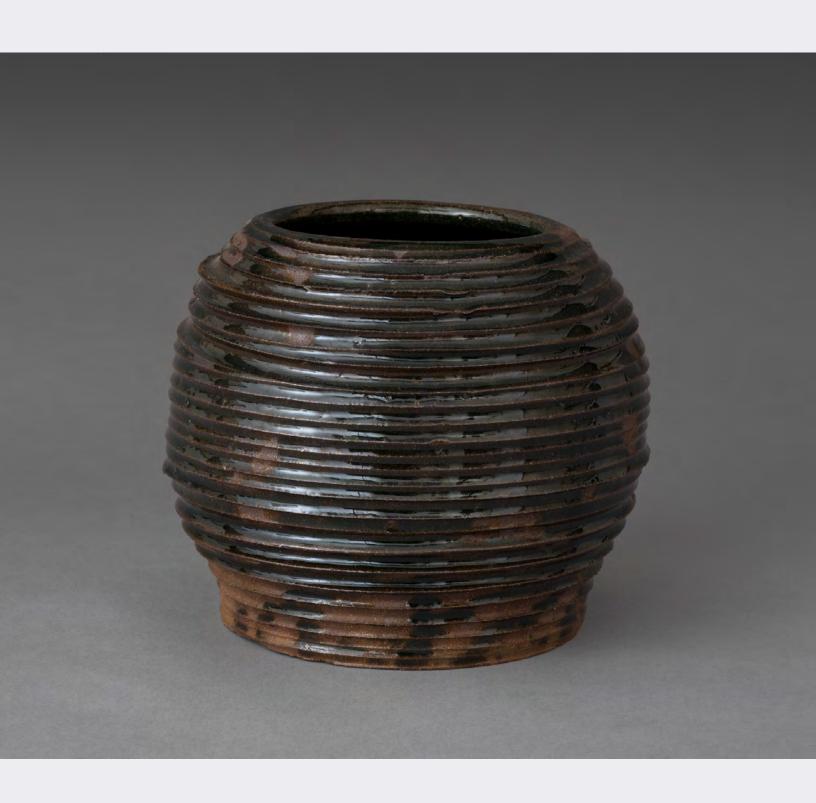
THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. new blue palette), 2024 Alkyd enamel on canvas, walnut frame 30 x 40 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. vase 1), 2024 Ceramic 8 x 8 x 10 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. vase 3), 2024 Ceramic 8 × 8 × 8 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. vase 4), 2024 Ceramic $10 \times 10 \times 10$ inches



THOMAS MCDONELL Untitled (Figueroa St. vase 6), 2024 Ceramic 10 x 10 x 10 inches



THOMAS MCDONELL
Untitled (Figueroa St. vase 5), 2024
Ceramic $5 \times 5 \times 10$ inches



THOMAS MCDONELL
Untitled (Figueroa St. vase 2), 2024
Ceramic
8 × 8 × 8 inches

THOMAS MCDONELL: FIGUEROA ST. PAINTINGS

Thomas McDonell sculpts paintings. Applying urethane alkyd enamel – a heavy-duty industrial house paint – with his hands, McDonell focuses his attention on a collision of raw materials, allowing for confident, impulsive gestures. Eschewing brushes, oils and acrylics, the Figueroa St. paintings seem purely expressive: there is no preamble, no wind-up, the painting is its own palette, the site of the original idea. The suggestion of a handprint, of fingernails scratching thickly applied paint evoke the notion that a painting is something to be grappled with, wrestled or coaxed into place..

The work deals with gesture, form, and temporality. Large smears, splashes and swipes of color within non-representational compositions form complex interlocked arrangements and atmospheres. Using historically fundamental substrates such as canvas and linen, and donated mistint house paint for its surplus -- the paintings have formal concerns having to do with composition and color, marks and depth, and the evidence of process. Within marks and color, surprising textures mingle and overlap, dodging interpretation but also tempting the viewer — the eye yearns to define and simplify the murky and abstract, but a figure or a shape is another attachment, like a name or title. McDonell prefers the anonymous, using only shorthand signifiers to identify the paintings, allowing them to float in and out of one another. In this way they play with ideas of individualism and personal versus collective identity. They are boundless, and the contradictions that they present free them from the limitations of categorization as abstraction, which they are not.

McDonell cites conversations with Desmond Morris, ethologist and author of the "The Biology of Art," as the catalyst to his finger painting, which began as a way to reduce mediation in the work. Morris analyzes the art making practices and behaviors of primates, and contrasts them with a socio-historical framework of human art and aesthetics. One apt example is Rhoda Kellogg's, (early childhood psychology scholar, and archivist of children's artwork) finding that young apes and children will scribble and draw — with hands or tools — when shown what to do, yet human children quickly begin to imitate while primates do not. Morris goes on to cite Scottish painter Alan Davies, who, when teaching art, began his classes with "pure idea-less activity," drumming into his students the notion that "work without thought requires a great deal of mental discipline [...] before he can achieve an image without the intermediacy of reasoning."

Are these paintings cynical? McDonell encourages the question. The works are an investigation into the creative process and its origins. McDonell's practice now extends beyond canvas and paint: wooden frames are milled in LA and assembled in his studio, a process he likens to putting a period at the end of a phrase. Ceramic sculptures shine with dark, inky glazes and earthy silica. Their spiral ridges and horizontal grooves are marked by deeper calligraphic scratches, mirroring and counterpointing the hand markings of the paintings. The pedestals that support the ceramics are made of great rolls and stacks of newspaper, as if a vase perched atop is a wellhead gathering together nodes of time and information. News, text, media — current and outdated, faded — is piled together under a simple clay pot holding fresh-cut flowers: the present. Temporality underpins the work, but McDonell's impulse is to create worlds without necessarily adhering to a historical timeline

FIGUEROA ST. PAINTINGS (CON'T)

The Japanese philosopher Soetsu Yanagi, founder of early 20th century mingei movement, celebrates beauty in everyday, utilitarian objects created by unknown craftsmen. The Figueroa St. works propose the paintings as an esoteric practice, and an exercise of the soul. Ancient art — painting caves, carving bones, etching stones — once served a practical, evolutionary purpose. Morris writes, "it might even be argued that the modern human artist has little more reason for painting a picture than does a chimpanzee...." Exploring a spiritual landscape is one good reason. Yanagi writes, "When an artist creates a work, he and the work are two different things. Only when he becomes the work itself and creates the work (in other words, when the work alone is creating the whole work) does true work become possible. Not the artist but the work should say "I am." McDonell "didn't need these paintings to have an object or goal," he wanted "them to be themselves."

One recent painting has an anomalously poetical title, "Untitled (Figueroa St. mystic dharma)." Near McDonell's studio on Figueroa St. once glowed a giant temple, orange like a Tibetan monk's robes, against a cloudless blue sky. Originally the Fourth Church of Christ, the building was constructed in 1924, a time when Christian Science was at its height of membership. Mystic Dharma Buddhist Temple was founded to serve the area's Mandarin Chinese community and moved into the church in the early 1980s. It had stained glass windows and a large indoor worship or meditation room: a good room for painting. But the Buddhists are gone now, the temple is a christian church again. There are some celebrity members and the pastor is a budding influencer. The building has been blasted white. It's set to open this September, too.

This ties into an economy of form: art-by-limitation, art made with available resources via the donated house paint, the discarded newspapers. Zooming out, the passage of time sees large scale conurbation, the conversion of old storefronts into high rises, and the liminal and pragmatic energy of the Mystic Dharma temple: constantly shapeshifting to house a different faith, a different practice. These paintings live in and document that moment of transition.

THOMAS MCDONELL:

Thomas McDonell (b1986, New York) attended Phillips Academy at Andover, Massachusetts where he studied at the Addison Gallery of American Art. At Phillips Academy, McDonell created the Andover Wine Club at the Peabody Institute of Archeology, assisted in the permanent installation of Sol LeWitt's Wall Drawing #713 at the Addison, and received the academy's top award for academic achievement in visual art. McDonell moved to Bali, Indonesia where he worked as studio assistant to Ashley Bickerton from 2004 to 2006, mounting an exhibition of works on paper at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute. McDonell enrolled at NYU where he studied painting with Keith Mayerson, Michael St. John, Maureen Gallace, and Ross Bleckner; performance and sculpture with Rico Gatson and Curtis Mitchell; and art history with David Rimanelli and Nicholas Mirzoeff. In 2007 McDonell moved to Accra, Ghana and enrolled at the University of Ghana Legon. In Accra, McDonell studied performance and photography with Lyle Ashton Harris and film with Balufo Bakupa Kanyinda. In 2007 McDonell enrolled at East China Normal University in Shanghai, China where he studied film history with Christine Choy and curatorial practices with Defne Ayes. McDonell graduated from NYU in 2008, receiving the Richard Hirsch Memorial award for outstanding scholastic attainment in the arts; he holds a Bachelor of Science degree in fine art. On graduation from NYU, McDonell moved to Hengdian, China where he began work for Lionsgate film studio. From 2008 to 2018 McDonell worked as an actor on film and television projects in leading roles for Disney, Paramount, Warner Brothers, and NatGeo. During that time McDonell's studio practice frequently recontextualized the visual language of contemporary film production, with notable digital video and sculptural installations at Andrea Rosen Gallery, Ramiken Crucible, the Bellevue Arts Museum, and the Southwest Museum of The American Indian. More recent exhibitions have focused on painting, sculpture, and performance, and include: Body Of, Malraux's Place, Los Angeles (2022); Me, De Boer Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); F Magazine, Celebrity, Aeon Books, New York (2019); Ungaengung Chokipoki Sojubang, Phil Gallery, Los Angeles (2019); Power Hour, Aetopoulos, Athens (2018); and Fluxus Festival, Los Angeles Philharmonic at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles (2018). McDonell currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

THOMAS MCDONELL:

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

- 2022 Body Of: Selected Works 1998-2022, Thomas McDonell with Brock Enright. Malraux's Place. LA, CA.
- 2021 Me. De Boer Gallery. LA, CA.
- 2021 The National Anthem. Lateral Addition. Philadelphia, PA.
- 2019 Vernacular Environments Part 3. Edward Cella Art & Architecture. LA, CA.
- 2019 Celebrity, curated by F Magazine, Celebrity. Aeon Books. NY, NY.
- 2019 Ungaengung Chokipoki Sojubang. Phil Gallery. LA, CA.
- 2018 Tragedy Plus Comedy, Roberts Projects. LA, CA.
- 2018 Before that, now, OOF Books. LA, CA.
- 2018 Power Hour." Aetopoulos. Athens, Greece.
- 2018 Fluxus Festival, Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Walt Disney Concert Hall. LA, CA.
- 2017 Observatories, Center for the Arts. Jackson, WY
- 2016 Bandini International Film Festival, Arturo Bandini. LA, CA.
- 2016 Not my Bridge, Not my Water. Aetopoulos. Athens, Greece.
- 2016 Paper Paper, curated by Calvin Marcus, Ditch Art Projects. Springfield, OR.
- 2016 Tearblower 1: 50 Shades. Egyptian Art and Antiques. LA, CA.
- 2016 The Pedestrian Tunnel Entrance to the Southwest Museum. Southwest Museum. LA, CA.
- 2016 Material Art Fair. Expo Reforma. Mexico City, Mexico.
- 2015 Tickles. 356 South Mission Road. LA, CA.
- 2015 La Cucaracha. Blood Gallery. New York, NY.
- 2015 New Babylon. Roberts & Tilton. LA, CA.
- 2015 Reality. Arturo Bandini. LA, CA.
- 2015 Zombo Italiano. Arturo Bandini. LA, CA.
- 2014 Humor Risk. Kathleen Cullen Fine Arts. New York, NY.
- 2014 Make it Work A Brief Survey of Functional Artworks. Sam Parker. New York, NY.
- 2014 Warner Bros. Suite. Field Contemporary. Vancouver, BC.
- 2013 The Object Salon. Roberts & Tilton. Los Angeles, CA.
- 2013 Love Me Tender. Bellevue Arts Museum. Bellevue, WA.

CURATORIAL:

- 2017 BLOWOUT Audio Magazine. Arturo Bandini, LA, CA.
- 2016 Phil Davis: The Velvet Rope. The Mountain View Mausoleum, Altadena, CA.
- 2010 Black Mondays: Good Vision. Kathleen Cullen Fine Arts, New York, NY.
- 2009 Borna Sammak: Best Buy. Best Buy, 622 Broadway, New York, NY.

