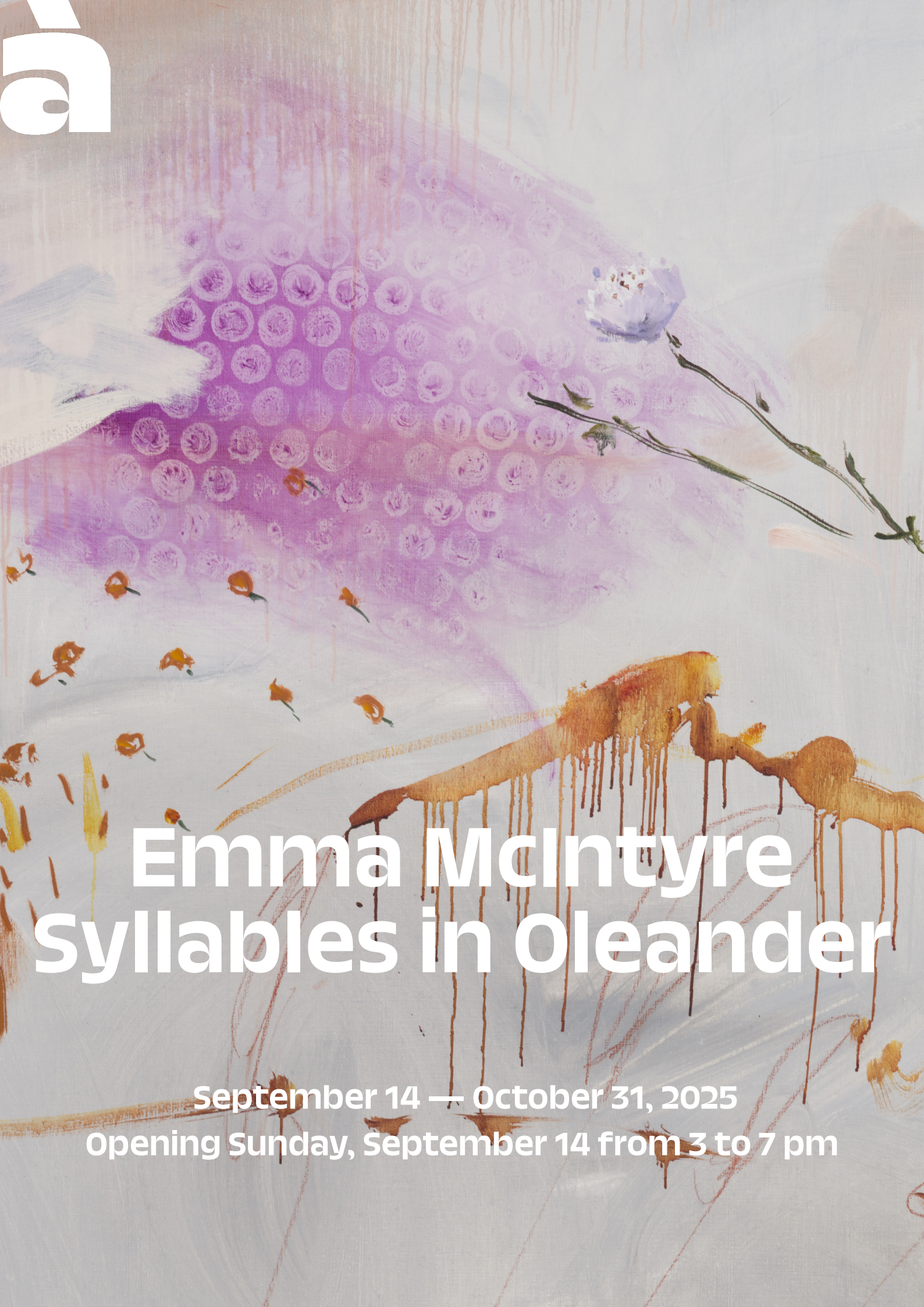


The background is an abstract painting. It features a large, textured purple shape in the upper left, composed of many small, circular, cell-like patterns. To its right is a single, detailed blue flower on a thin green stem. Below these, there are several small, scattered orange and yellow flower-like shapes. The bottom half of the image is dominated by thick, expressive brushstrokes in shades of brown and orange, with long, vertical drips of paint extending downwards. The overall color palette is soft and painterly, with a mix of purples, blues, oranges, and browns on a light, off-white background.

Emma McIntyre Syllables in Oleander

September 14 — October 31, 2025
Opening Sunday, September 14 from 3 to 7 pm

It's impossible to think about Emma McIntyre's work without thinking about all of art's history, and it's impossible to think about Emma McIntyre's work without thinking about Los Angeles.

And so, in *Syllables in Oleander* there it is: art history accumulated, laid bare of historical context, and filtered through the prism of L.A.'s shadowless daylight—revivified and teased out to excite anew.

"Theater is the negation of art"¹ writes Michael Fried derisively from 1967. So be it, McIntyre and Los Angeles respond in unison from 2025, distilling and amplifying the artifice out of AbEx's gospel to resuscitate its corpse into a presence completely of its own time—a history-less, frontier abstraction rising up from a sun-burnt, jacaranda-tinted coastal mirage. The musty old canvas becomes a stage, populated with myriad characters, busy with action. In Los Angeles, says the poet Stephen Yenser, in place of sun-sets,

"the set is sunning—stunning,

Even, in ever acuter, gentler rays that with the smaze

*Turn the horizon Technicolor pinks and blues, lavenders and zincs."*²

Wryly echoing Rococo's proscenium schema favored by Watteau and Fragonard, efflorescent wings of ornament enframe the compositions' empty Center Stage. McIntyre mounts a set, and populates it with an overflowing polyphony of proliferating references. From Sigmar Polke come the wallpaper and the pattern. From Cy Twombly, the swans and the curlicues of scribbles: the painting of writing, returning the linguistic back to the symbolic.

Says Roland Barthes—he is McIntyre's literary reference of choice for the months of the show's making—with a nod to Twombly: «Whether we deal with canvas, paper or wall, we deal with a stage where something is happening. So that we must take a painting as a kind of traditional stage: a curtain rises, we look, we wait, we receive, we understand; and once the scene is finished and the painting removed, we remember: we are no longer what we were: as in ancient drama, we have been initiated.»³

In *Fray me like silk*, as the painting's background pours of glacial blue, burnt ocher, and dark mulberry purple arrange themselves horizontally, the stagecraft action takes place—continues taking place into perpetuity—on top of its striations, the slender white line of an elongated paint splatter bouncing, jutting, and swiveling to orient the surface towards the eye's vertical stance.

In *Blue chance* and *Tell it slant*, The Nabis—Vuillard and Ranson, Denis and Serusier—with their penchant for a touch of Japonisme, deliver the backdrop scenery of an Orientalist lily pond. Twombly's swans are floating stage left.

With *The Swan*, *the Archer*, *the Scorpion*, a theater of art history of McIntyre's scenography, the whole backdrop is slowly oxidizing into L.A.'s present continuous post-apocalyptic—both symbolically and literally, for today's life prefers the literal to the symbolic. As in Polke's erstwhile experiments with oxidation, the work's Patina paint's chemical reaction will continue transforming the canvas' surface throughout the show's duration, and well beyond—the future, it suggests, is uncertain, even as the stage is always set oh-so-perfectly.

In the smaller pieces, a catalog of painting's innermost insecurities comes to commingle all at once. Elegantly stuck between chaos and diagram, coloristic harmony and befouled gray, the works flicker in bands and bursts of dense colorways, then disappear, then reappear again behind washes of overlapping pigment—a pictorial harmony at war with itself, continuously stuck in a cyclical war between suspension and animation, revelation and obfuscation. In these strata of abstract painterly gesture, a catalog of techniques: layers of art history peeking through each other on the shared surface. One steps back, and cue the

¹ Fried, Michael, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1998, p. 148-172, p. 153, p.163

² Yenser, Stephen, *Blue Guide*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 2006, p.10

³ Twombly, Cy, Barthes, Roland, Bastian, Heiner, and White, David, *Cy Twombly: Paintings and Drawings: 1954-1977*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, 1977, p. 54-77, p. 54

suspense music: for the tableaux are under attack by Freddy Krueger! These glove-like sunburst patterns, composed of rake-scraped furrow strippings of the top painting coat, reveal the ones below in a brazen refusal of stylistic consistency. In the drama of surface action that is abstract painting, apophenia is forever but a suggestion away, nowhere more than in a city that has always viewed cultural debris as raw material.

Barthes again: “The truth of things is best read in refuse. It is in a smear that we find the truth of redness; it is in a wobbly line that we find the truth of pencil. Ideas are not metallic and shiny Figures, in conceptual corsets”⁴. In *Heaven or the Abyss*, the sum of all the show’s other parts, a swarm-like pattern of bubble wrap’s slackened plastic’s gridded imprint blossoms inwardly into a garden of tiny flowers—a rococo theatrical set that wouldn’t let the eye rest. On top, the splashing, splattering action of the paint happens in a continuum, the Technicolor saturation of its elegantly bold palette harmonizing in a performance that could only belong to the pinks and blues of L.A.’s light palette—and there it is, time and place be damned, coruscating under the Parisian skies and into years and locations unknown—all of art’s history, remade in McIntyre’s image.

— Valerie Mindlin

⁴ Ibid, p. 57

EMMA MCINTYRE

Born in 1990 in Auckland, New Zealand.
Lives and works in Los Angeles.

Emma McIntyre creates vivid abstractions imbued with chromatic and gestural energy. Instinctual yet deeply considered, her canvases explore painting’s material and alchemical possibilities. Employing oils and unconventional substances, she pairs chance-based, intuitive processes with a repertoire of motifs and compositional strategies gleaned from a close study of art history—reformulating these divergent threads into a fresh and unbridled mode of painting that is uniquely her own.

Recent solo exhibitions of McIntyre’s work include *Among my Swan*, David Zwirner, Hong Kong (2025); *Objects or Vapours*, Coastal Signs, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand (2024); *An Echo, A Stain*, David Zwirner, New York (2023); *Pearl Diver*, Château Shatto, Los Angeles (2023); *Madonna of the Pomegranate*, Coastal Signs, Auckland (2022); *Up bubbles her amorous breath*, Air de Paris, Romainville (2022); and *Heat*, Mossman Gallery, Wellington (2020). In 2023, paintings by the artist were included in L’Almanach 23, the fourth edition of the biennial held at Le Consortium, Dijon, France. McIntyre’s work is in the permanent collection of the Long Museum, Shanghai, and the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.



Emma McIntyre Leads You Part of the Way There

Ocula sat down with artist Emma McIntyre in her L.A. studio in anticipation of her solo show opening at David Zwirner in Hong Kong.

★ Save to My Ocula

By Jonathan Griffin - 25 March 2025, Los Angeles

Beyond the wide, panoramic windows in New Zealand-born painter Emma McIntyre's studio, downtown Los Angeles spreads out in all its inelegant, sunbaked disarray. Inside the studio, McIntyre's paintings—some small, but many more than two metres tall—are drenched in light.

McIntyre, who relocated from her native New Zealand in 2019, belongs to a generation of abstract painters, a significant number of whom are women and based in L.A., that has risen to market prominence in the last few years. She began her career showing with Hopkinson Mossman, in Wellington and Auckland, and subsequently with the gallery it evolved into, Coastal Signs—an alternative-model, artist-run cooperative. While McIntyre is now represented by David Zwirner, alongside Château Shatto and Air de Paris, she remains on the board of Coastal Signs.

Full article :

<https://ocula.com/magazine/spotlights/emma-mcintyre-leads-you-part-of-the-way-there/>

IN CONVERSATION

Getting Up Close and Personal with Painters Emma McIntyre and Richard Hawkins

By Richard Hawkins

May 6, 2025



Photograph of Emma McIntyre

Born in New Zealand and now based in Los Angeles, the artist [Emma McIntyre](#) is no stranger to frequent travel. But the vibrant art scene of Hong Kong, the site of her second exhibition with David Zwirner, is a bit farther afield than even McIntyre ever imagined herself. Titled *Among my swan*, a name she's borrowed from Mazzy Star, the show demonstrates the artist's taste for chromatic abstractions that transcend the limits of language. "By introducing the swan motif," McIntyre told [Richard Hawkins](#) last month, "I can connect to all the painted swans in art history." She does so using oil paint alongside unconventional materials like oxidized iron, a gambit, Hawkins says, that suggests McIntyre's granular attention to her artistic forbearers. "I think the difference is your investment in the history of painting," he says, "but also how closely you look at other paintings." Fresh off his own show at Hong Kong's Empty Gallery, *The Garden of Loved Ones*, he and McIntyre got on a Zoom to discuss their shared obsessions: Baudelaire, art historian Michael Levey, and painting with your body, literally.

Full article :

<https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/up-close-and-personal-with-painters-emma-mcintyre-and-richard-hawkins>



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AIR DE PARIS



Emma McIntyre Syllables in Oleander

14 septembre — 31 octobre 2025

Vernissage Dimanche, 14 septembre, 15 — 19h

Il est impossible de penser au travail d'Emma McIntyre sans penser à toute l'histoire de l'art, et il est impossible de penser au travail d'Emma McIntyre sans penser à Los Angeles.

Ainsi, dans *Syllables in Oleander*, tout y est : l'histoire de l'art accumulée, dépouillée de son contexte historique, réfractée à travers le prisme de la lumière éclatante de Los Angeles —revivifiée et déployée pour susciter une excitation nouvelle.

« Le théâtre est la négation de l'art »¹, écrit avec dérision Michael Fried en 1967. Soit, McIntyre et Los Angeles répondent à l'unisson en 2025, distillant et amplifiant l'artifice au-delà de l'évangile de l'Expressionnisme Abstrait, ressuscitant son cadavre en une présence pleinement actuelle — une abstraction sans Histoire, surgissant des confins de l'Ouest, mirage côtier brûlé de soleil et teinté de jacarandas. La vieille toile poussiéreuse devient une scène, peuplée d'innombrables personnages, bouillonnante d'activités. À Los Angeles, dit le poète Stephen Yenser, au lieu de couchers de soleil :

« le décor s'illumine — éblouissant,
Sous des rayons toujours plus aigus, toujours plus doux, qui, avec la brume,
Transforment l'horizon en un Technicolor de roses et de bleus, de lavandes et de zincs. »²

Écho ironique à la théâtralité du Rococo prisée par Watteau et Fragonard, les ailes efflorescentes de l'ornement encadrent l'avant-scène vide des compositions. McIntyre dresse un décor et le peuple d'une polyphonie foisonnante de références. De Sigmar Polke viennent le papier peint et le motif. De Cy Twombly, les cygnes et les volutes griffonnées : la peinture de l'écriture, qui rend au langage sa charge symbolique.

Roland Barthes — sa référence littéraire de prédilection durant les mois de conception de l'exposition — dit, avec un clin d'œil à Twombly : « Qu'il s'agisse de toile, de papier ou de mur, il s'agit d'une scène où quelque chose a lieu. Je voudrais qu'on considère le tableau comme une sorte de théâtre à l'italienne : le rideau s'ouvre, nous regardons, nous attendons, nous recevons, nous comprenons et la scène passée, le tableau disparu, nous nous souvenons : nous ne sommes plus les mêmes qu'auparavant : comme dans le théâtre antique, nous avons été initié. »³

Dans *Fray me like silk*, alors que l'arrière-plan du tableau se déverse en bleus glacials, ocres brûlés et pourpres de mûre foncée disposés en strates horizontales, l'action scénique se déploie — se déploie encore et à l'infini — au-dessus de ces stries, la fine ligne blanche d'une éclaboussure de peinture allongée rebondissant, jaillissant et pivotant pour orienter la surface vers la verticalité du regard.

Dans *Blue Chance* et *Tell it Slant*, les Nabis — Vuillard et Ranson, Denis et Sérusier — avec leur penchant pour une touche de Japonisme, délivrent le décor orientaliste d'un étang de nénuphars. Les cygnes de Twombly flottent côté cour.

Avec *The Swan, the Archer, the Scorpion*, théâtre de l'histoire de l'art selon la scénographie de McIntyre, tout le décor de fond s'oxyde lentement, reflétant le présent continu et post-apocalyptique de Los Angeles — à la fois symboliquement et littéralement, car on préfère aujourd'hui le littéral au symbolique. Comme dans les expériences passées de Polke avec l'oxydation, la réaction chimique de la peinture à la patine continuera de transformer la surface de la toile tout au long de l'exposition, et bien au-delà — l'avenir, suggère-t-elle, reste incertain, même lorsque la scène semble toujours dressée à la perfection.

Dans les petites pièces, un éventail des plus intimes insécurités de la peinture viennent à se mélanger toutes. Élégamment coincées entre chaos et schéma, entre harmonie colorée et gris sali, les œuvres scintillent en bandes et éclats de gammes chromatiques denses, puis disparaissent, puis réapparaissent derrière

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des lavis de pigments superposés — une harmonie picturale en guerre avec elle-même, prise sans fin dans un cycle de suspension et d'animation, de révélation et d'obscurcissement. Dans ces strates de geste pictural abstrait, un catalogue de techniques : des couches d'histoire de l'art qui se révèlent mutuellement sur la surface commune. On recule d'un pas, et place à la musique de suspense : car les tableaux sont attaqués par Freddy Krueger ! Ces motifs éclatés en rayons solaires, composés de sillons qui ont raclé la couche picturale supérieure, révèlent celles d'en dessous dans un refus insolent de toute cohérence stylistique. Dans le drame de l'action de surface qu'est la peinture abstraite, l'apophénie n'est jamais qu'à un souffle, surtout dans une ville qui a toujours considéré les débris culturels comme matière première.

Barthes encore : « Le déchet, voilà où se lit la vérité des choses. C'est dans la trainée qu'est la vérité du rouge; c'est dans la tenue relâchée qu'est la vérité du crayon. Les Idées ne sont pas des Figures métalliques et brillantes dans des corsets conceptuels. »⁴ Dans *Heaven or the Abyss*, somme de toutes les autres parties de l'exposition, un motif en essaim formé par les empreintes quadrillées du plastique distendu d'un papier bulle implose en un jardin de petites fleurs — un décor théâtral rococo qui refuse le repos de l'œil. Par-dessus, les éclaboussures et les projections de peinture se produisent en continu, la saturation technicolor de sa palette élégante et audacieuse s'harmonisant dans une performance qui n'appartient qu'aux roses et aux bleus de la lumière de Los Angeles — et la voilà, peu importe le temps et le lieu, scintillant sous les cieux parisiens et dans des années et des lieux inconnus — toute l'histoire de l'art, réinventée à l'image de McIntyre.

— Valerie Mindlin

⁴ Ibid, p. 57

EMMA MCINTYRE

Née en 1990 à Auckland, Nouvelle-Zélande.
Vit et travaille à Los Angeles.

Emma McIntyre crée des abstractions vives imprégnées d'énergie chromatique et gestuelle. Instinctives mais profondément réfléchies, ses toiles explorent les possibilités matérielles et alchimiques de la peinture. Utilisant des huiles et des substances non conventionnelles, elle associe des processus intuitifs basés sur le hasard à un répertoire de motifs et de stratégies de composition issus d'une étude approfondie de l'histoire de l'art, créant un mode de peinture frais et débridé qui lui est propre.

Parmi les expositions personnelles récentes de McIntyre figurent *Among my Swan*, David Zwirner, Hong Kong (2025); *Objects or Vapours*, Coastal Signs, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa, Nouvelle-Zélande (2024); *An Echo, A Stain*, David Zwirner, New York (2023); *Pearl Diver*, Château Shatto, Los Angeles (2023); *Madonna of the Pomegranate*, Coastal Signs, Auckland (2022); *Up bubbles her amorous breath*, Air de Paris, Romainville (2022); et *Heat*, Mossman Gallery, Wellington (2020). En 2023, des œuvres de l'artiste ont été incluses dans L'Almanach 23, la quatrième édition de la biennale qui s'est tenue au Consortium, à Dijon, en France. Les œuvres de McIntyre font partie de la collection permanente du Long Museum, Shanghai, et de la galerie d'art Auc-kland Toi o Tāmaki.



Emma McIntyre Leads You Part of the Way There

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IN CONVERSATION

Getting Up Close and Personal with Painters Emma McIntyre and Richard Hawkins

By Richard Hawkins

May 6, 2018



Photocourtesy of Emma McIntyre

Born in New Zealand and now based in Los Angeles, the artist [Emma McIntyre](#) is no stranger to frequent travel. But the vibrant art scene of Hong Kong, the site of her second exhibition with David Zwirner, is a bit farther afield than even McIntyre ever imagined herself. Titled *Among my swan*, a name she's borrowed from Mazzy Star, the show demonstrates the artist's taste for chromatic abstractions that transcend the limits of language. "By introducing the swan motif," McIntyre told [Richard Hawkins](#) last month, "I can connect to all the painted swans in art history." She does so using oil paint alongside unconventional materials like oxidized iron, a gambit, Hawkins says, that suggests McIntyre's granular attention to her artistic forbearers. "I think the difference is your investment in the history of painting," he says, "but also how closely you look at other paintings." Fresh off his own show at Hong Kong's Empty Gallery, *The Garden of Loved Ones*, he and McIntyre got on a Zoom to discuss their shared obsessions: Baudelaire, art historian Michael Levey, and painting with your body, literally.

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