

Petzel

SEAN LANDERS

April 17 – May 23, 2025
520 W 25th Street

Petzel is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by New York-based artist Sean Landers, opening Thursday, April 17, 2025. The show marks Landers' eighth solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view through May 23, 2025, at 520 West 25th Street. Situating the artist's innermost musings alongside his animal subjects, Landers oscillates between humor and vulnerability, revealing the uncomfortable truths which underpin both the act of artmaking and the human condition.

Here Landers fuses longstanding motifs in his work, which originated as discrete series: his depictions of aspen tree carvings, and his North American animal portraits. These modalities have been a cornerstone of Landers' practice since he was a graduate student in the Yale University MFA program, creating early sculptures of animals which would become his primary subjects, in a studio space which he blanketed with dense, automatic writings across its walls. Landers has since extended these inscriptions, which include confessional content, speculative conjectures, and cheeky refrains, to his aspen tree paintings.

Using the folk tradition of the arborglyph, Landers' representations of tree carvings serve as both a meditative exercise and a monument to life itself—a record of existence and output. Landers was initially inspired by 19th-century aspen etchings left by Basque shepherds, who lived as nomads across the Western United States. As an antidote to lonely solo travel, the shepherds would etch their names, poetry, drawings, and more into the bark, often using tools like knives, and in some cases, their fingernails. While aspens only live to be about a century old, in many cases, these carvings have outlived the trees themselves, and remain on fallen, dead trees. Further, the aspens lend an extended metaphor to the interconnectedness of the artist's practice itself: much like the interwoven root systems of these trees, Landers' multimedia oeuvre continues to morph and cross-pollinate along conceptual lattices.

When layered alongside his wildlife portraits, his creatures inhabit an existential awareness, gazing back through the viewer with an arresting aura. The eyes of Landers' animals bear an almost human quality, familiar yet cryptic, staging an engrossing encounter with their quiet effect. In this way, Landers' personal prose inherits larger contexts of mortality, such as ecological disaster and shifting political realities. His depicted animals are animated alongside bubbles of thought, both playful and foreboding in nature. In this way, Landers conjures reflections on the impermanence of human life and the pieces we leave behind.

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About Sean Landers

Sean Landers (b. 1962, Palmer, MA) lives and works in New York City and Southold, New York. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1984 from the Philadelphia College of Art and a Master of Fine Arts from Yale University School of Art in 1986. Since the 1990s, Landers has been creating and exhibiting his highly conceptual body of work employing a vast range of media that includes painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, film, performance, and writing.

He has exhibited internationally and nationally with notable solo shows at Le Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris; Le Consortium Museum, Dijon; Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, St. Louis; Kunsthalle Zürich, Zürich; Petzel, New York; Ben Brown Fine Arts, Hong Kong; Capitain Petzel, Berlin; Timothy Taylor Gallery, London; Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo; Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels; and Various Small Fires, Dallas; among others.

Landers' work is in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York; Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, Annadale-on-Hudson; Kistefos Museum, Jevnaker; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham; Tate Modern, London; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; among others.

In May 2025, the Newport Art Museum will stage *Lost at Sea*, an exhibition of Landers' paintings placed in dialogue with art history through a selection of Winslow Homer's 19th-century *Harper's Weekly* illustrations from the Museum's permanent collection. Anchored by *Moby Dick, The Whale* (2013/2023), Landers' monumental 28-foot-long painting of Herman Melville's legendary creature, the exhibition invites viewers to reflect on ambition, memory, legacy, and loss.

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 Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.