

Matthew Marks is pleased to announce Vija Celmins, the next exhibition in his galleries at 1062 North Orange Grove and 7818 Santa Monica Boulevard. Including eighteen paintings, sculptures, and works on paper made between 2014 and 2018, this will be Celmins's first exhibition of new work in Los Angeles in over forty years.

The largest work in the exhibition, an oil painting more than five feet wide, depicts the night sky in reverse, an array of dark stars floating on a light-gray field. Its seemingly monochromatic palette includes vibrant colors applied in numerous layers to create a sense of depth. At the other end of the scale, just eighteen by thirteen inches, Celmins has painted a close-up of a glazed ceramic plate, depicting it as an all-over pattern of white cracks on greenish-gray field.

Since the 1960s Celmins has been rendering nature imagery from black and white photographic sources, exploring the same subjects repeatedly in paintings, drawings, and prints. But imagery is not her foremost concern: "The recognizable image is just one element to consider. The paintings seem more a record of my grappling with how to transform that image into a painting and make it alive." This process can be seen here in three works on paper — one a charcoal drawing, another a mezzotint, and the third a drypoint — based on a photograph of the ocean she took fifty years ago from a pier in Venice, California. The role of the photograph, she explains, is to provide an "armature on which I hang my marks and make my art," in this case three distinct variations on the same moment frozen in time.

The scrutiny of Celmins's gaze is perhaps most evident in her sculptures. *Two Stones* (1977/2014–16) consists of a rock and a painted bronze replica virtually indistinguishable from the original. For each of the *Blackboard Tableau* works (2007–15), she collected an early-twentieth-century writing slate and then used wood, paint, and pastel to create an identical twin. Exhibited side by side, each pair is a perceptual conundrum that invites sustained looking.

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