

McCLAIN
GALLERY



SUNS

SETH CAMERON

November 15, 2018 - January 5, 2019

ARTIST RECEPTION

Thursday, November 15, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

ARTIST TALK at 6:30 pm

McClain Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Seth Cameron featuring watercolors on panel inset in artist made frames. Layering washes of watercolor, Cameron achieves a surface that is totally non-reflective, yet opens up into window-like compositions. This will be Cameron's first solo exhibition at McClain Gallery. He will be present for the opening and will give an Artist Talk at 6:30 pm during the reception.

Hanging scrolls are traditionally suspended between thin wooden bars at the top and bottom, the tiangan (天杆) and digan (地杆), heaven and earth, respectively. The inlaid hardwood bars

of my frames allude to this tradition, to the dialectic of the real and the imagined. I make the inlays from cherry, walnut or mahogany and the rest from maple. The frames are ebonized using a solution of tannic acid, steel wool and white vinegar, accelerating the effect of exposure to the sun.

The frame narrates the transition from the real to the imaginary. The maple projects from the wall, through the darker hardwood, across the interior shadow and the painted border within the paper's bounds - a proscenium into the fiction of the space of painting.

We relate to paintings the way we relate to mirrors, doors and windows: through the vertical symmetry of our bodies and the horizon of the world beyond. We create fictions with and about all these rectangular spaces - this face in the mirror is what's become of me, through this door is where I need to be. But a painting is an affront. It does not reflect our image. We cannot walk through its frame or inch closer to its horizon. That refusal is painting's allure.

In a Song Dynasty ink, the fog is blank paper. In a Corot landscape, flecks of white paint double as dappled light. Abstraction is no different. A square of paint or paper is both real and a representation, receding or advancing, asserting itself or dissolving. Paintings of all epochs and cultures command real space and fictional space to coexist.

Pursuing this dialectic of space is how I came to watercolor. Watercolor does not sit on a surface the way oil or polymer paint does. There is no sheen or glimmer to tell us we are bodies moving in the world. There is no texture of the oil or acrylic to narrate the painter's process. The pigment embeds in the paper. The surface is the space.

For each painting, I glue hot-pressed watercolor paper to a hardboard panel then trim the paper with an x-acto knife. I do a light wash of watercolor in a single pigment. Then I use a straightedge to draw the composition with a 6H pencil. The squares and rectangles and border of the composition are then painted in varying hues with a round watercolor brush before a final wash is done in the origin color with a wide flat brush. Often the composition must be repainted several times.

Variation in the scale of shapes, value, and the saturations of colors direct the eye from one moment to another through a painting. Composition manipulates our experience of time, speeding it up and slowing it down. In my paintings, sameness and symmetry collapse time toward the singularity of instantaneity and eternity.

Each day, I see a new sunrise and a new sunset. Against this persistent newness and novelty, the sun is the singular, unchanging, same idea. The compositions of my paintings rely on identical squares, reflecting each other across an undelineated horizon. The same square. The real is the representation. The surface is the space. The refusal is the allure. Instantaneity is eternity. This is why I've called the show Suns - sameness as the singularity of experience.

-Seth Cameron

Seth Cameron (b. 1982 in South Carolina) is a painter and writer in New York. He graduated from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 2004 and took a job writing copy for an arts nonprofit to pay for a studio he still couldn't afford. Meanwhile, Cameron co-founded The Bruce High

Quality Foundation, an artist collective masquerading as an artist's foundation that has produced unsanctioned public interventions, musical theater performances and myriad other nose-thumbing commentaries on the art world. In 2009 the collective set about forming a real non-profit institution, BHQFU. Cameron served as President of this tuition-free experimental art school, teaching courses in creative writing and art history, until its closing in 2017. During and since, he has taught sculpture, drawing and intradisiplinary studies at Cooper Union, lectured across the country on arts education, exhibited his own paintings and had a bit of writing published by The Paris Review, The Brooklyn Rail, The Miami Rail and Zwirner Books. In the spring of 2019 he will have a solo exhibition at Nathalie Karg Gallery in New York titled Sunless. And in the summer, courtesy of the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, he will hermit away to West Cork, Ireland, to look at the sea.

For images and additional information please contact info@mclclaingallery.com.

Image: Seth Cameron, No 35, 2018, watercolor on paper in maple artist frame, 60 x 30 inches