

Kysa Johnson *Empire Loop*

February 21 – March 23, 2013

Reception: Thursday, February 21, 6 – 8pm

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10 – 6pm



Morgan Lehman Gallery is pleased to present *Empire Loop*, a solo exhibition of recent paintings by Kysa Johnson. The exhibition opens on February 21st with a reception for the artist from 6-8pm, and will be on view through March 23rd. An extension of *Empire Loop* will be presented at this year's Armory Show, Pier 94, March 7 – 10, 2013.

In her signature style, Kysa Johnson employs microscopic patterns found in nature blown up to an extreme scale to build universal worlds. In *Empire Loop*, the artist enlarges subatomic decay patterns (the signature pathways that unstable particles travel along when they decay and transform into other subatomic particles) to depict a physical reality that is naturally invisible to the naked eye. By rendering these essential patterns in chalk, ink and watercolor on panel, Johnson removes the subject from a purely scientific context and introduces it into the arena of visual culture.

These seemingly abstract markings are layered to recreate compositions by 18th century artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi. When placed in the broader realm of history and art, these fundamental marks become the building blocks to the compositions of which they are conceptually related, such as Piranesi's Roman ruins or the seal of the fallen Austro-Hungarian Empire. By combining these micro patterns of flux and breakdown with images of change and dissolution on a grandiose level, Johnson finds a symmetry between the fundamental, physical and systematic parts of our universe.

On one hand, *Empire Loop* examines decay in its clinical form, and on another it looks at instability on an emotional and historical level. These subatomic patterns correlate with larger movements of people, history and time, suggesting the inevitability of decline in all aspects of the natural and man-made world. As depicted through Piranesi's images of ruins, *Empire Loop* refers specifically to the cycle of empires rising, falling and being replaced. With subtle references to the recent collapse of financial giants Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers, Johnson draws a parallel to the fallen empires of our own time. As we struggle to find our place in history, this series urges us to consider the full scale of what we are a part of, in both milliseconds and millennia. With a scientific eye, *Empire Loop* illuminates consistent patterns of change that have shaped our history's past, present, and future.

Kysa Johnson received her BFA from Glasgow School of Art, Scotland in 1997. Her paintings, drawings and wall installations have been exhibited widely, including solo exhibitions at the Nicolaysen Art Museum, Casper, WI, and the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT, as well as group shows at deCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA, The Tang Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY and the Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, NY. International biennials include the Dublin Contemporary and The Canary Islands Biennial, both in 2011. She currently lives and works in New York City.

For more information, please visit morganlehmgallery.com, or contact the gallery at 212.268.6699.