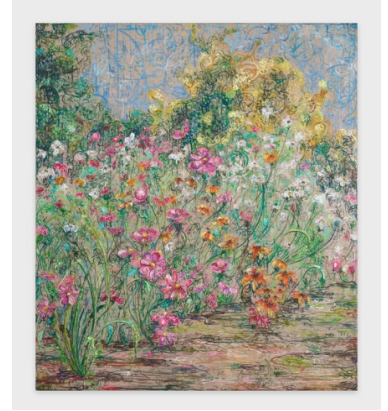


Kysa Johnson *Eat the Sun*



March 2 – April 8, 2022

Morgan Lehman is pleased to present “Eat the Sun”, an exhibition of new paintings by Kysa Johnson, the artist’s fifth solo show with the gallery.

In these works, Johnson continues her decades-long use of macroscopic and microscopic scientific imagery to investigate the ways in which we relate to our universe. The artist utilizes an alphabet of particle decay patterns (the infinitesimal pathways that subatomic particles travel along as they decay into more stable particles), and layers these drawing marks to build sprawling networks of visual information. These networks then coalesce before the viewer’s eyes into recognizable figuration.

While earlier bodies of work by Johnson considered subjects such as the birth and death of stars and cellular structures, the “Ghosts In Common - Flora and Fauna” series deploys an alphabet of subatomic decay patterns to ruminate on the more terrestrial imagery of gardens, flowers, and plants, pondering the ways these entities connect us to each other, the earth, and the stars. Creators of the atmosphere that allows life as we know it to exist, flora and fauna are a unifying backdrop and continual presence in human and early hominid culture, and mark the moments that define our humanity, birth, and death. They also embody the universal cycles that occur at all scales: from subatomic particles to stars. Johnson likens watching the wild roses growing in her garden to observing the life cycle of a star in compressed time: a billion years in 72 hours. Plants serve as a physical conduit to our star, processing the sun’s energy into material that we consume to live. Through them, we eat the sun.

The paintings in this exhibition are rendered in acrylic on Belgian linen, a new painting surface in the artist’s repertoire. Whereas the glossy black grounds and the chalkboard surfaces of previous works referenced the vast universe and Johnson’s scientific sources of inspiration, respectively, the linen material is solidly of this earth, of the human scale and experience. There is a warmth to the woven threads that speaks to the rich tradition of linen use in paintings over the past several hundred years. We’re also reminded, perhaps, of the interwoven nature of all things in the cosmos.

By focusing her eye to different moments in time, whether centuries on earth or millions of lightyears away, Johnson is always trying to tease out what it means to be human in the universe. What are our commonalities within the larger scope of human history? What is shared by the flowers in our gardens and the cosmic dust that forms these flowers, and all of us? What are our ghosts in common?

Kysa Johnson was born in Illinois in 1974, and graduated from The Glasgow School of Art in Scotland. Johnson has had solo exhibitions at institutions such as The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art (Ridgefield, CT), The National Academy of Sciences (Washington, DC), Roebing Hall Gallery (New York, NY), The Nicolaysen Museum (Casper, WY), and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art (Houston, TX). She has been featured in group exhibitions at The Tang Museum (Saratoga Springs, NY), The Katonah Museum of Art (Katonah, NY), The Hudson River Museum (Yonkers, NY), DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum (Lincoln, MA), Royal Scottish Academy (Edinburgh, UK) and Standpoint Gallery (London, UK), among others. Johnson has created site-specific installations for KK Projects (New Orleans), Dublin Contemporary (Ireland), Grace Farms Foundation (New Canaan, CT), Halsey McKay Gallery (East Hampton), and for the New York Armory Show with Morgan Lehman. She is a New York Foundation for the Arts fellow in Painting and Pollack Krasner Grant recipient. The artist lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.