

## ***Figure in the Field***

Curated by Jan Dickey

January 6 – February 21, 2026

### **Opening Reception**

Thursday, January 8, 6-8 pm

Amy Applegate

Yeonji Chung

Dan Gausman

Christine Jung

Andris Kalņins

Amy MacKay

Claire Nicolet

Allegra Toran

Amanda Valdez



A field is an open space. Within it, the figure takes shape for a moment, distinct, and then falls back into the cover of the tall grass. *Figure in the Field* at Morgan Lehman Gallery brings together nine artists, working across different styles and media, who play with the conventionally established distinction between figure and field, subject and ground. For these artists the field is an active force which decides how much of the subject will appear and how quietly it will slip away into the uncertainty and possibility of hiding. The work speaks from the shifting margins of perception where presence, attention, and fact stalk us, uncommitted but curious, from somewhere in the open field.

Amy Applegate allows her still life objects to surface for a brief moment from the lushness of her paint strokes before retreating again into that soft oil, as if a face barely rises above water and then sinks unexpectedly. Yeonji Chung abstracts from daily life until her subjects become essentialized silhouettes pressed up close to the compositional frame, their layered edges delicate and appearing ready to dissolve into the surrounding field of color. Christine Jung presents an empty ceramic stoop marked by the glazed-on shadow of a tree that is not present with us in the gallery, a reminder that presence and absence can be experienced in the same moment.

Dan Gausman positions viewers inside sports arenas that refuse logic, where spiraling court markings on actual concrete unsettle our usual sense of balance, as we imagine our own figure trying to navigate the unfamiliar playing field. Claire Nicolet places us on a path that winds through a mystical blue field of patterned foliage, which flattens the viewer into a pictorial realm that is both landscape and decorative surface. Meanwhile, Amy MacKay creates paintings which appear as gestural abstraction at first glance, yet, through layered movements of color, unveil the ghostly trace of bodies moving through time and space.

Andris Kajiņš reflects on the language of pigments, uncovering the histories and cultural associations which render paint color names and the paint itself as conceptual subjects living in a shifting field of social and linguistic reinterpretation. Allegra Toran uses fluid gestures of additive and subtractive drawing to merge representational subjects with their environment, moving the viewer between material surface and pictorial depth with each mark. Finally, Amanda Valdez produces a tactile oscillation between figure and field by centering bold figure-like forms upon her textile supports, even as the figures, made of the same fabrics, threaten to be reincorporated into the soft woven surface.

Across painting and sculpture, the works in this exhibition trace the movement between distinction and absorption: how a form holds itself apart, how it is shaped by the space around it, and how it ultimately returns to the field that made it possible.

—Jan Dickey, Winter 2026

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**Amy Applegate** (b. 1992) makes paintings rooted in observation. She responds to nearby objects and arrangements through works that empathize, exaggerate, reduce, and manipulate shifting relationships and associations over time. She received her MFA from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 2025 and her BFA from Herron School of Art and Design in 2015. In 2022, she received a grant from the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation. She will be a resident at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation in Bethany, Connecticut, in January and February of 2026. Her work has been exhibited at Massey Klein Gallery in New York, Vardan Gallery in Los Angeles, Smoke the Moon in Santa Fe, Heaven Gallery in Chicago, and Krannert Art Museum in Champaign. She currently lives and works in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Yeonji Chung** (b.1997) is a painter currently based in Brooklyn, New York. Chung paints abstract forms inspired by the intimate details of her everyday surroundings, reimagining familiar moments into unknown imagery. Throughout the process, she carefully engages with the nature of oil paint to craft her own abstract language. Her work has been exhibited at Hilton New York Times Square (New York, NY), Ivory Gate Gallery (Shanghai, China), Steuben Gallery (Brooklyn, NY), and SAIC Galleries (Chicago, IL). She is a 2025 Hopper Prize Finalist and 2025 Innovate Grant Honorable Mention. She holds an MFA from Pratt Institute (2025) and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2021).

**Dan Gausman** (b. 1987) abstracts boundaries and architecture with a material guided interdisciplinary practice to highlight where structure meets feeling. Raised in rural Nebraska he now lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He received a BA in Film from Chapman University in 2009. His work has been shown at Minimal Gallery, Little Lightning, Bob's and been featured in Domino Magazine and Gothamist. He is a co-director of the New York based gallery 95 Gallon.

**Christine Jung** (b. 1995) is a ceramic installation artist exploring the consequences of capitalist and imperial hegemony. Drawing from different hierarchical aesthetics, hauntology, and deconstruction theory, their installations often follow narratives of injustice and culminate in a curse in support of the philosophy that all actions have consequences. Christine received their Master's of Fine Arts degree at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2024 and their BA from Swarthmore College in 2017. They are a recipient of the Graduate Commons Grant, the NCECA Multicultural Fellowship, and the Windgate Fellowship for Arrowmont and The Color Network. Their work has been shown in Philadelphia, Los Angeles, New York, and abroad.

**Andris Kaļiņins** (b. 1994) is a contemporary painter and scenographer whose practice treats oil paint as an active protagonist, exploring its "living" presence through minimal, conceptual abstractions in which text operates as a distanced form of power. Born in Balvi, Latvia, he lives and works in Riga. Working primarily in oil on carefully selected linen, informed by old master painting traditions, he examines the relationships between material, title, and compositional structure as a way to address contemporary conditions. His solo exhibitions include Andris Kaļiņins' Oil Painting (Jūrmala Museum, 2022) and Weißer Saal (TUR\_telpa, Riga, 2023), and his work has been shown at the Latvian National Museum of Art (2024), Independent Art Fair SUPERMARKET (Stockholm, 2024), Sofia Art Fair (2025), and the Art Academy of Latvia's centenary exhibition Academia (Arsenāls, Riga). His work is held in the collections of the Latvian National Museum of Art, the Zuzāns Collection, and Signet Bank, as well as private collections in Latvia, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Bulgaria.

**Amy MacKay** (b. 1985) is an artist and educator based in Los Angeles. Through an intensive, research-based process, she creates paintings that document site-specific, performative events staged with people in her life. Her work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including at La Beast Gallery, Baert Gallery, and the Honolulu Museum. She holds an MFA from the University of California, Irvine, and a BA from Bard College, and has been supported by awards such as the Jon Imber Painting Fellowship and the Leo Freedman Fellowship.

**Claire Nicolet** (b. 1988) creates enchanted scenes that float between fantasy and the familiar. Drawing inspiration from her daily walks through natural and urban landscapes, Nicolet's imagined spaces awaken the imagination through a fusion of color, light, and botanical notes—one series anchored by a mesmerizing blue. Based in Paris, she studied graphic design and engraving at the Estienne School of Art before pursuing fine arts at the Beaux-Arts, Paris. In 2018 she was awarded the Prix Yishu 8, completing a residency in Beijing the following year. In 2022 she was nominated by Françoise Pétróvitch for the 25ème Prix d'Antoine Marin, exhibiting before panelists including David Hockney and Kamel Mennour. Her work has been shown at Galerie du Jour - Agnès B in Paris and Edji Gallery in Brussels. Most recently, she was commissioned for a site-specific ceiling piece for Boucheron's inaugural space in Shanghai.

**Allegra Toran** (b. 1997) explores the emotional response to the sublime beauty of nature and its interaction with the human experience. Through her emotional landscapes she creates a meeting ground for the observed, the invented and the remembered. Born in New York, NY she now works out of Jersey City, New Jersey. She received her BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2019. Her work has been shown at Thierry Goldberg Gallery, Urbana Gallery and the Living Gallery in New York City as well as Galerie Lucida in New Jersey.

**Amanda Valdez** (b. 1982) is a mid-career studio and research-based artist best known for mixed-media paintings which incorporate sewing, embroidery, fabric, oil stick, and other paint media. Her work begins through drawing and references landscape, physical experiences, archaeological objects and sites that she encounters in day-to-day life, research, and travel. Valdez was born in Seattle, Washington in 1982 and lives in New York, New York. She earned an MFA from Hunter College, New York, New York and a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. Valdez has exhibited her work internationally and her work is held in the public collections of Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, New York, Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, Davis Museum, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts, and US Embassy, US Department of State, Guatemala City, Guatemala.