

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Recent Paintings, an exhibition of paintings by Chris Martin, on view from May 27 through July 1, 2022. An opening reception will take place on Friday, May 27 from 6 to 8 PM.

For over forty years, Martin has energized painting by acknowledging its long and varied history while constantly giving himself over to each successive moment in the studio. Themes and motifs evolve and reemerge over time, but unique arrangements of forms and materials take shape in each body of work and exhibition. Long associated with the community of artists in Brooklyn who have staked out idiosyncratic and innovative directions, Martin also maintains a lifelong connection to the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York, where the paintings for this exhibition were made.

While over the course of his career he has made paintings of all sizes—including monumental ones that challenge the idea of scale altogether—here Martin focuses on what for him are medium-sized canvases. Abstraction, landscape, and collage coexist on equal, if repeatedly negotiated terms, so that taking in the show as a whole renders moot such categorical distinctions. Instead, Martin provides evidence for the overlapping and mutual influence of numerous artistic lineages. On several occasions, gestural and geometric brands of abstraction inhabit the same composition, though in other cases, one or the other of these modes dominates as Martin makes full use of its visual moods and textural possibilities.

For instance, the bands of color intersected by zigzagging or diamond forms that have shown up in Martin's work in different guises over the years, and that nod toward hard-edged aesthetics while maintaining a notably soft and surreal pictorial weight, appear here with a particularly crystalline clarity. Their uneasy relationship to the grid evokes the sensation of being in a familiar place but in unexpected weather. Other paintings, which exude a more improvisational energy, also feature linear frameworks, though these are jigsaw-like and divide up the areas of color beneath into angular, unclassifiable shapes.

Martin's use of glitter and other media adds a further layer of complexity, as chromatic shifts are accompanied by changes in reflectivity, opacity, and depth.

It would be a mistake, however, to assess Martin's work based on formal terms alone. While some pictures in this exhibition include appropriated images of recognizable Martin forms like the planet Saturn, cannabis leaves, and mushrooms, even the works that remain entirely non-objective are full of palpable moods and a sense of place. Some communicate wintry austerity and the sense of spaciousness and wonder that accompany it; others pulsate with an awareness of the life cycle, as well as the human responses of pathos and humor that tend to crop up as one season gives way to the next.

The natural world is never far away from Martin's eye, process, or ethos. He has been known to work outside in the landscape itself, and to make plain the connections not only between earth, heaven, and light, but also between the many sense impressions that flood awareness when an artist—or a viewer—is immersed in an experience of the ambient environment. These include awareness of other modes of cultural expression like music and literature. All of these elements lend Martin's work a ritualistic power rooted in timeless appreciation of what it means to be alive, to relate to one's artistic ancestors, and to commune with people, animals, trees, mountains, snow, sun, and anything else that crosses the field of consciousness while the painting is underway.

This openness is evidence of the transformational temperament that Martin brings to the lineages that formed him. In terms of general approach, his treatment of the studio as an alchemical vessel in which the self and the world catalyze one another provides the most direct link between his project and the work of New York School abstract expressionists. However, as the work in this show makes clear, for Martin, the studio is a radically open proposition fixed in neither time nor space. If the Catskills and Williamsburg serve as physical and spiritual homes whose presence informs both form and content, the outer

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

reaches of the galaxy and the deepest reaches of the psyche are also places where Martin makes his work; the same could be said of the soil and the street, or of flesh and bones.

Chris Martin has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions worldwide, including Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2015); Rectangle, Brussels (2015); Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany (2011); and Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (2011). Recent group exhibitions include Black Light, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (2018); Animal Farm, Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, Connecticut (2017); and Thinking Out Loud: Notes on an Evolving Collection, The Warehouse, Dallas (2017). His paintings are included in the permanent collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Museum of Contemporary Art Denver; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among other museums. Paintings, a career-spanning monograph, was published by Skira in 2017. Martin lives and works in Brooklyn and the Catskills, New York.