

**Ivan Morley**

Tragedy, [sic]

March 6 – April 26, 2025

New York

Press Release

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to announce *Tragedy, [sic]*, a solo exhibition of new works by Ivan Morley. The exhibition will be on view in New York at 520 W. 20th St. from March 6 through April 26, 2025. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, March 6 from 6 to 8 PM.

Morley has continued to build on a decades-old typology where form, color, and material layer to create paintings that are as much object as they are rendered image. Each piece is produced by painting an underlayer in watercolor and slowly building onto the canvas with thread, focusing on small, embroidery-ring-sized sections at a time, so that the completed work isn't revealed to the artist until the end of the embroidery process. Looking therefore becomes secondary to the act of building or constructing an image on a micro scale.

Inspired by the title of a Bee Gees song, *Tragedy, [sic]* alludes to the way a musician may elongate or alter the pronunciation of a word to better match the rhythm of a song, and so too can a painter modify an image to better meet the needs of a composition. In this sense, painting, or the creation of a visual image, is flexible in the way a written narrative or other methods of storytelling can't be. Language and narrative are consistent elements in Morley's work, whether through the inclusion of letter-like forms such as those present in *Tehachepi, [sic]* (2024), or by grouping the artworks with serialized titles. Morley continues to develop what he calls a "narrative baggage," where each work is building onto the last and therefore, the meaning behind each painting gets multiplied over time.

While Morley has a deep understanding of painting as a discipline, he's able to engage in more rigorous and physical production methods that exist outside of two-dimensional space. By prioritizing seemingly "lower" materials such as thread and reverse glass painting, his paintings enter into conversation with more sculptural and conceptual practices, bridging a gap between the constructed and the depicted.

Even in his more traditional compositions, experimentation remains at the core of Morley's project. *Tragedy, [sic]* (2024), from which the exhibition gets its name, is featured alongside several studies created by Morley. Each of the four studies was produced using the same elaborate methods as Morley's other artworks, prompting questions about what constitutes an artwork and how to confront the hierarchy that may exist between things that would be considered studies versus completed paintings. For Morley's practice in particular, the development and presentation of an image over time is crucial to his own understanding of the meaning behind a work.

Some of Morley's most radical works in this exhibition are also his most conventional. *Tehachepi, [sic]*, *A True Tale* (2024), for example, depicts two distinguishable figures situated amongst the rippled marks and textured swaths of color for which Morley has become known. The work also incorporates x's, arrows, and other remnant notes the artist has left for himself throughout the production process. Morley opts to incorporate these notes

into the artwork because of the additive nature of embroidery, where once thread is added, it can't easily be edited or removed. Even in more abstract versions from the same series, like *Tehachepi, [sic], (After Cippiello)* (2024), Morley utilizes the same scale and vertical orientation commonly associated with portraiture to not only connect this work to others in the series, but also to a larger art historical lineage of portraiture. Throughout the exhibition, Morley's paintings highlight how an image can hold a story or multiple histories on a single plane, and how those histories are connected to the history of painting as a whole. Like language, the paintings on view are strung together in such a way that it requires multiple works, created over many years, to provide the necessary context.

Ivan Morley (b. 1966, Burbank, California) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at venues including David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles (2022); Bortolami Gallery, New York (2021 and 2016) and Kimmerich Galerie, Berlin (2014). Group exhibitions include *Abstract America Today*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2014); *Painting Expanded*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York (2011); *The Artist's Museum*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2010); *DAS GESPINST*, Die Sammlung Schürmann zu Besuch im Museum Abteiberg, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany (2009); *Imagination Becomes Reality, Part IV: Borrowed Images*, Sammlung Goetz, Munich (2006); and *Painting in Tongues*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2006). His work is in the permanent collections of institutions including Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (K21), Düsseldorf, Germany; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and University Museum of Contemporary Art at the Fine Arts Center, University of Massachusetts Amherst. In 2020, the first comprehensive monograph dedicated to Morley was published by David Kordansky Gallery and Bortolami Gallery. Morley lives and works in Los Angeles and Big Sur, California.