



Dave McDermott | *Untitled* | 2016-2020

Throughout my practice in general, I continue to be interested in the possibilities of the meta-allegorical in painting. Allegory being the relationship of a single symbol to a 'thing symbolized', I have always been interested in going beyond that and creating works where multiple symbols/ordering systems exist in the work simultaneously, all working together to require a certain balancing act of interpretation and discovery on the part of the viewer. In other words, the paintings themselves do not present the simple key of one to one translation that allegory does. In my work, the meaning of the paintings is derived by the viewer holding all the various symbolic relationships present in the work in their head, all at the same time.

I have emphasized this way of working in this show, modeling the overall physical structure of the exhibition on a sort of poetic interpretation of an alter-piece painting. I have carried over this structure of multiple works making up a whole, with one primary 'central' panel (in this case the gold diptych), and multiple auxiliary panels to flush out the 'story'. Both emphasize the importance of beauty and structure in the same way. The difference (beyond religious vs. secular) is that while an altarpiece historically was a didactic object of sorts, used to relate specific religious stories to the masses and reveal meaning, my

work obfuscates rhetorical meaning in order to emphasize feeling, or 'a vibe' as we call it.

The works in this show orbit around the mythology of going 'West'. I come from the West, and I think its inherent qualities of openness, other-worldliness, awkwardness, strangeness, perversion, hedonism, desire, and indecipherability have always informed my work. I credit being raised in the West with my mindset as an artist, namely to avoid didactic and illustrative tendencies, and instead to aim for a transmission of feeling... more poetry than 'point'.

Having now lived in New York for the better part of two decades, the West is simultaneously native and foreign to me, which now allows me to relate to the desire to go west, as well. The desire to head west has a long history in western culture, and particularly in America, and this history is often marked by a stark contradiction between expectation and reality. 'The West' is seen as paradise, a Garden of Eden, a place of rebirth, of new life and expanded prospects. But this hopeful prospect often goes sideways at some point along the way, and those seeking fecundity often find death. Whether this death is physical and final, or rather metaphorical, and thus a potential

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source of regeneration, is a never-ending question. In each case, it is unclear whether the story is really about end or origin, or if they are in fact the same thing. This obfuscation between beginning and end is where the show exists.

The works in this show take a variety of cultural references that I relate to this contradictory myth of the West as a starting point, and then reorder them with my own language. *The Garden of the Hesperides*, Joyce's *The Dead*, Tennyson's *The Lotos-Eaters*, the 'not quite' idyllic paintings by Puvis de Chavannes, Manet, etc., as well as more recent, popular mythologies of the West, John Lennon's *Lost Weekend* for example, his attempt to escape himself by leaving his life behind and heading to L.A., and of course the ubiquitous desires of every young person who heads to L.A. to 'make it', serve as armatures on which to build new images and ideas. Ultimately 'West' means many things: it has an inherent ambiguity that mirrors my own way of working, and it's that combination of openness, freedom, idyllic beauty, and unease that I'm emphasising in these works.

—Dave McDermott. Brooklyn, March, 2020

GRIMM is pleased to announce *West*, a new solo presentation by Dave McDermott at our Keizersgracht 241 gallery space in Amsterdam. This exhibition marks the artist's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery.

About the artist

Dave McDermott (b. 1974 in Santa Cruz, CA, US) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He earned his BFA from the Academy of Art College in San Francisco, and his MFA from Parsons School of Design in New York.

Selected solo exhibitions include *The Long Goodbye*, GRIMM, New York (US); *The Idiot*, Brennan & Griffin, New York (US), 2016; *Goethe's Girlfriend*, Brennan & Griffin, New York (US), 2014; *The Power and Influence of Joseph Wiseman*, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL), 2013; *Pleasure Centre*, Twig, Brussels (BE), 2012; *Tot*, Duve, Berlin (DE), 2012; *A Rake's Progress*, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL), 2011; *The Modern Temper*, Duve, Berlin (DE), 2011; *Most Of What Follows Is True*, Royale, San Francisco (US), 2005.



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Selected group exhibitions include *Passing Leap*, Hauser & Wirth, New York (US), 2015; *Group Exhibition*, Brennan & Griffin, New York (US), 2015; *East Side to the West Side*, *The FLAG Art Foundation*, New York (US), 2014; *Huidige Zaken*, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL), 2014; *Beyond the Object*, Brand New Gallery, Milan (IT), 2013; *Black Medicine* (Dave McDermott/Nick van Woert), Room East, New York (US), 2010; *Hi, Low and in Between*, curated by Matthew Day Jackson & Simone Subal, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL), 2009.

Dave McDermott's work is included in the collections of Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL); EKARD Collection; Zabłudowicz Collection, New York, NY (US); Mizuho Art Collection, London (UK) amongst others.

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Van Baerlestraat 80
1071BB Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Keizersgracht 241
1016EA Amsterdam
GRIMM Fine Art BV

202 Bowery
New York 10012
United States

Tel +31 (0) 20 6752465
info@grimmgallery.com
www.grimmgallery.com

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