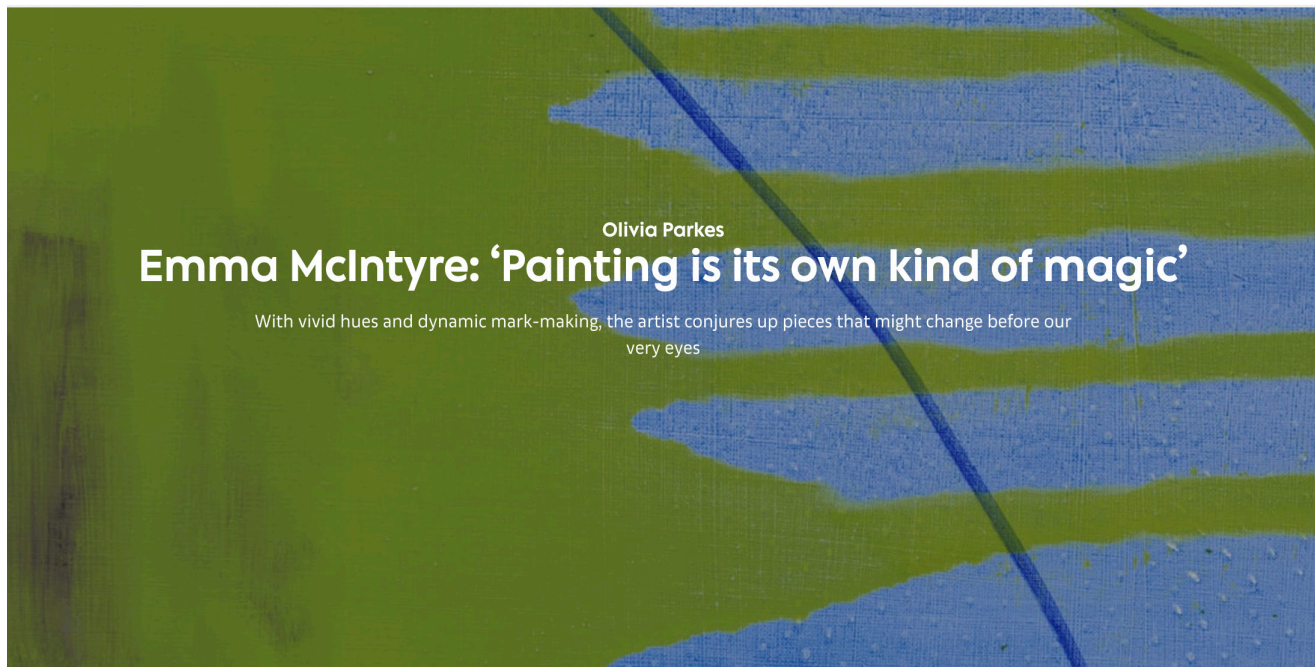


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Olivia Parkes

Emma McIntyre: 'Painting is its own kind of magic'

With vivid hues and dynamic mark-making, the artist conjures up pieces that might change before our very eyes

Emma McIntyre's paintings seem caught mid-transformation. Her saturated, abstract canvases are full of motion, palpable in quickly swept or scribbled gestures, or in poured colors that have slowly pooled and dried. 'I want to arrest my paintings in a state of becoming,' says the New Zealand-born artist, speaking from her studio in Los Angeles. The finished works 'never quite crystallize into a recognizable image or space,' she adds, 'but you have the feeling that, with a single brushstroke, it might become recognizable.'

The paintings are full of sudden turns: vivid pinks and petal tones blossom into muddier ground; a cloud of violet dulls to indigo or iodine red; the paint is dense and then suddenly thin; the movement is always fluid. To achieve these restless tensions, McIntyre's process balances chance and deliberate action. The artist begins working with her canvases on the floor, pouring and swiping paint to allow an initial composition to emerge. 'Pouring allows so much more chance to come in,' she says. 'It forces me to be looser.'



Emma McIntyre. Photography by Brad Torchia. Courtesy of the artist.

After preparing multiple canvases, McIntyre homes in on a single work, studying its space and composition, often in conjunction with references from art history. She finishes each painting in a burst of controlled energy, working it swiftly with brushes, rags, oil sticks, and her body. McIntyre, 32, began experimenting with body printing during the pandemic, and often uses her hands to scratch or swipe at paint.

A corner of the artist's studio is devoted to 'science experiments,' where she has begun working with a rust ground and a chemical solution that oxidizes. The results are rich, surprising, protean. In *Madonna of the Rose* (2023) – on display in her solo show, 'An echo, a stain,' at **David Zwirner** in New York – a chemical reaction appears to occur in front of viewers' eyes. In fact, the effect of the solution will continue, causing the work to change subtly over time. 'I like the idea that the painting is autonomous,' McIntyre says, 'that it will continue to have a life of its own, beyond my intervention.'



Left: Emma McIntyre, *Madonna of the Rose*, 2023. Courtesy the artist, Château Shatto and David Zwirner. © Emma McIntyre. Right: Emma McIntyre, *Queen of the air*, 2023. Courtesy the artist, Château Shatto and David Zwirner. © Emma McIntyre.

All this movement is held together by skillfully cultivated moments of stillness. White storks and peony roses reoccur across works in the exhibition. McIntyre describes representational motifs like this as 'punctuation': places that pause the action. Areas of blank canvas around the edges or at the center of the paintings have a similar force. They also recall us to the simple fact of what we're looking at. 'Painting is its own kind of magic,' McIntyre says. 'But it's also just a bunch of materials on a canvas. I'm so aware of both.'

Emma McIntyre is represented by [Chateau Shatto](#) (Los Angeles); and [Air de Paris](#) (Paris).

Emma McIntyre's exhibition 'An echo, a stain' runs at David Zwirner's 69th Street location in New York until October 28, 2023.

Olivia Parkes is a painter and writer based in Berlin.

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Captions for full-bleed images (from top to bottom): 1. Emma McIntyre, *Queen of the air* (detail), 2023. Courtesy the artist, Château Shatto and David Zwirner. © Emma McIntyre. 2. Installation view of 'Emma McIntyre: An echo, a stain' at David Zwirner, September 21 to October 28, 2023. Courtesy of David Zwirner.