ALMINE RECH

50 Paintings

Nov 17, 2023 — Jun 23, 2024 | Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, US

This fall, the Milwaukee Art Museum will present 50 Paintings, a landmark survey featuring recent pieces by 50 artists working today that demonstrates the vitality and relevance of contemporary painting as a medium. Eschewing curatorial narratives and thematic groupings, 50 Paintings invites visitors to explore a wide array of artistic styles and strategies, engage in close looking, and formulate their own assessments of painting as it is practiced today. 50 Paintings will be on view in the Museum's Bradley Family Gallery Nov. 17, 2023–June 23, 2024.

"50 Paintings celebrates the enduring vitality of painting, featuring artists who are shaping our contemporary visual culture," said Marcelle Polednik, Donna and Donald Baumgartner Director of the Milwaukee Art Museum. "This exhibition offers our visitors a unique opportunity to participate in dialogue about the art of our time, and in relation to the long arc of painting's history represented in the Museum's collection."

From internationally recognized names like Cecily Brown, David Diao, Nicole Eisenman, Judy Ledgerwood, and Amy Sherald to rising talents like Jake Troyli, Carmen Neely, GaHee Park, and Cinga Samson, the 50 artists in 50 Paintings are each represented by one painting created in the past five years. Though the works on view reflect a range of painterly styles, expressions, and concepts, all were created through the application of oil or acrylic paint with a brush to stretched canvases or other traditional painting techniques.

"In 1840, the French painter Paul Delaroche looked at a photograph and famously declared that from that day forward, painting was dead, a statement so provocative that it remains in circulation today," said Margaret Andera, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art and co-curator of 50 Paintings. "In showcasing the range in the language of painting being created today, 50 Paintings provides an abundance of evidence to the contrary and serves as a timely reminder of the inexhaustible possibilities of the medium."

Reflecting how approaches to contemporary painting are representative of diverse artistic voices from around the globe, 50 Paintings includes artists from four continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America) and eight countries (China, England, Germany, Iran, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, and the U.S.), more than half of whom are women. In a marked departure from standard museum practice, the exhibition will withhold interpretive text and encourage visitors to intensively study and draw their own conclusions about the works on view and the cultural impact of contemporary painting.

"To 'read' a painting is to linger over its surface, explore its pictorial space, and engage with the artist's imagination," said Michelle Grabner, artist, critic, and co-curator of 50 Paintings. "Rather than imposing a particular interpretation of a work on the viewer, our curatorial strategy for 50 Paintings welcomes open-ended explorations and personal responses. Our hope is that visitors will find connection, inspiration, and a deeper appreciation for the broad range of contemporary painting practices."

50 Paintings is the Museum's first survey of contemporary painting since 25 Americans: Painting in the 90s (1995), curated by Dean Sobel, the Museum's Chief Curator at the time. That exhibition included 75 paintings by 25 American artists, four of whom, Mary Heilmann, Judy Ledgerwood, Pat Steir, and Philip Taaffe, are also featured in 50 Paintings, as well as work by Michelle Grabner, co-curator of 50 Paintings.

50 Paintings is organized by the Milwaukee Art Museum and co-curated by Margaret Andera, Senior Curator of Contemporary Art, and artist and scholar Michelle Grabner.

All 2023 exhibitions are supported by the 2023 Visionaries. The Milwaukee Art Museum extends our sincere thanks to these donors for their leadership.