

Emma McIntyre

CHRIS SHARP GALLERY

For the inaugural show at Chris Sharp's new, eponymous gallery, Emma McIntyre presented a lush, terrifically vital suite of abstract paintings that evoke the seasons and their elemental atmospheres. Made with oils that she brought to California when she moved there from New Zealand last year, they represent a continuity of palette—especially in those acid brights that glow from within, as well as in the more punctual interference of small fluorescent-orange polka-dot floaters (sunspots?) that commingle with dusty polluted violet-tinged grays and an assortment of pinkish browns. The works also exhibit the artist's evolving repertoire of marks produced by tool and body: in the latter case with thumbprints and other physical impressions that register the intimate contact of skin and ground, and in subtractive patterns via the tracery of fingernails gouging the surface. *No One's Rose*, 2020, a small oil, oil stick, and pastel on canvas tucked in the back room, operates as a kind of analytical sampler comprising many constitutive modes of mark-making. Still, most of the works in this show, titled "Pour plenty on the worlds," were made during the worst of the Los Angeles Covid lockdown. Three large pieces that were inspired by *Fuses*, 2020, with its faraway glimpse of a fiery dawn, were installed in the front gallery in a clockwise formation relative to the order in which they were made.

McIntyre's paintings offer surprisingly capacious propositions. Color, for one, affects internal expansiveness, which at times causes her pictures to vertiginously open out. In a number of works, the artist inversely exploits the compositional ploy of the proscenium frame to mediate a spatial recession into a world of polychromatic pleasure, keeping hold of the devices of pictorial illusion (long since smuggled into abstraction) in order to reveal them as both means *and* end. McIntyre's citational practice extends beyond broad appropriations to more specific points of reference, such as J. M. W. Turner's vast mercurial skies and his flirtations with picturing loosened from representation, and, in a few of her smaller canvases including the denotatively titled *Cythera*, 2021, the follies of Jean-Antoine Watteau. *Cythera* implies a perverse and apolitical escapism belied by McIntyre's deft unmasking not only of reference but also of apparatus throughout. Indeed, every verdant garden or floral bower is accompanied by an attendant grid (earlier works have included nets that regulate the paint applied atop their repeating geometries) or unredeemed squirts of oil, as we see in *Fierce Jewels*, 2020, which features red, yellow, and blue dabs straight from the tube.

Material is visceral, and not just where shapes register the contours of bodily outlines, as in the lower-left corner of *Bathers*, 2020. The matrix in this one is conspicuously wonky, imperfectly rendered, a manifest sign of embodiment. *If there is light that has weight*, 2021, further poses the span of McIntyre's reach as key to the centering of the subject in front of its incandescent space, and none too subtly the historical conventions and discourses that would encompass it. The arch of cascading tendrils in this work—marks of golden yellow, deep purple, rich cobalt, and emerald green—shift as one scans them, flickering in and out of recognition. In response to having moved into a walk-up without a view on Manhattan's Lower East Side, Joan Mitchell said, "I carry my landscapes around with me." One might be tempted to read McIntyre's offerings as comparable indications of loss, but also of mobility (imagined as much as otherwise), and in some sense compensation. But this interpretation would ignore the fact that, as for Mitchell, the landscape already exists for McIntyre within the bounds of the aesthetic act. These paintings do not function as portals, but rather as critical evocations of chimera without immersion and meditations on why the result cannot be otherwise.

— Suzanne Hudson



Emma McIntyre, *Fierce Jewels*, 2020, oil and acrylic on linen, 11 × 12".