

MAUREEN PALEY.
STUDIO M



press release

PAUL P.
Vespertilians

16 September – 30 October 2022
private view: 16 September 2022, 4 – 7pm

Maureen Paley is pleased to announce *Vespertilians* by Paul P. This will be his fourth solo exhibition at the gallery and his first presented at Studio M.

The exhibition takes its title from Paul P.'s watercolour works that depict envisioned scenes of bats in flight. A recurrent motif within his landscapes since the early 2000's, employed as an indirect representation of transience and desire.

“Their point of origin was as a reference to the symbolist poet Comte Robert de Montesquiou (on whom Huysmans modelled the fictional character des Esseintes, and Proust his Baron de Charlus) who adopted ‘the nocturnal bird’, as he liked to call it, as an emblem of his rarefied self, an esoteric symbol of homosexuality in an era of criminalised desire...Between bird and animal, appearing at dusk and through the night, existing upside down/inverted, vilified and feared, the bat continues to hold as a metaphor for dexterity, elegance, otherness, and unshakable stigma” Paul P.

The colony of bats lends a cult-like inflection to these scenes, where they float within atmospheres that recall the tonal harmonies and muted colour arrangements of James McNeill Whistler's paintings. Through this combination, Paul P. draws on an aesthetic vocabulary from the turn of the twentieth century, including notions of fin-de-siècle imagery.

The vespertilian landscapes are shown alongside paintings depicting intimately cropped portraits of male subjects, projecting ambiguous glances from semi-abstract settings. The portraits are appropriated from gay erotic material published from the 1960s to the early 80s, a microcosm of time bracketed by the beginning of gay liberation and the HIV/AIDS crisis. Rather than existing as a direct representation of these figures, the works appear as subtle allegories expressing a feeling or impulse of their queer symbology that reflects aestheticism, the transience of youth and the recurrence of cultural tragedy.

Paul P. (born 1977, Canada) lives and works in Toronto, Canada. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Early Skirmishes*, Hordaland Kunstsenter, Bergen, Norway (2022); *Friendly in the Knife-edged Moment*, Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada (2022); *Centaurs on the Beach*, Morena di Luna, Hove, UK (2020); *Gamboling Green*, Cooper Cole, Toronto, Canada (2020); *Arrière-pensée*, Lulu, Mexico City, Mexico (2019); *Slim Volume*, Queer Thoughts, New York, USA (2019); *Civilization (inverted)*, Griffin Art Projects, Vancouver, Canada (2017); *The Rex Prisms*, Maureen Paley, London, UK (2016); *Dry Neptune*, Massimo Minini, Brescia, Italy (2011); *Dusks, Lamplights*, The Power Plant, Toronto, Canada (2007).

Selected group exhibitions include: *Houseguest: Shadows Fall Down*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2021); *Front International*, Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio, USA (2018); *Belonging to a Place*, Canadian Embassy, Washington, D.C., USA (2018); Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA (2014); *Les paris sont Ouverts*, Freud Museum, London, UK (2011); *Compass: Drawings of The Museum of Modern Art New York*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany (2011); *Male*, Maureen Paley, London, UK (2010); *Compass in Hand*, The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (2009); *Crack the Sky*, Biennale de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, Canada (2007); *People*, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples, Italy (2006).

His work is held in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, among others.

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