

The annexe

John Maclean *Works on Paper*

15 November – 21 December 2024

Preview: Thursday 14 November, 6-9pm

The Approach is pleased to announce an exhibition of new works on paper by John Maclean.

Working from details of vintage postcards, Maclean's watercolour paintings depict serene landscapes of snow-covered forests, lush foliage and radiant skies. While Maclean is best known for his densely coloured small-scale paintings on board, this new series of works sees the artist paint his familiar subject matter on found photographs of the night sky. These star maps, printed in negative, were discovered in a junk shop in Maclean's native Scotland. Attracted to their silvery-grey colour, size and framing, his impressionistic brushstrokes combine with these sublime speckled images to create works that sit in between photography and painting.

By focusing on a specific detail from a found postcard photograph, Maclean uses thick watercolour paint, often directly from the tube, to translate the image onto paper, practically obscuring the original photographic ground in the process. His paintings are layered, allowing paint to pool and accrue on the photographic surface only for it to be sanded down and washed. This technique creates ghost textures and images over which he paints anew, fortifying the tentative outline of a tree, stream or valley with vibrant colour.

In 2015, Maclean made his directorial feature film debut with the revisionist Western film, *Slow West* while his second feature film, *Tornado* is due to be released in 2025. As in his paintings, the landscape plays a prominent role in both films. It is perhaps an unsurprising subject matter for Maclean who grew up amid the dramatic landscape of the Scottish Highlands. Across both mediums however, Maclean's depictions are far from naturalistic, creating a dreamlike artificial environment with his use of saturated hues and tones. Maclean's paintings similarly bear a filmic quality as if vignettes from a larger narrative, made all the more apparent by the borders of the sky map photographs which resemble stills from a Super 8 film.

John Maclean (b. Perth, Scotland 1972) lives and works in London, UK. He studied at the Royal College of Art before following a career in music as a founding member of the influential group The Beta Band (1996-2005). He then pursued film directing before returning to painting during the pandemic.