

Reincarnations of Painting

**A group exhibition by
Susan Weil & José Betancourt, Tomashi Jackson, Eleanor Conover**

April 5 to May 3, 2025

Opening Reception: April 5, 2025 from 5 to 7pm

(Brookline, MA – March 11, 2025) Every few decades, the rise of new technology calls into question the resiliency of painting as a medium. When photography was invented in the mid-1800s, many surmised that it would lead to the death of painting. Today, with rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, these questions and concerns for the medium have resurfaced. Praise Shadows is thrilled to announce *Reincarnations of Painting*, a group exhibition featuring the artists Susan Weil & José Betancourt, Tomashi Jackson, and Eleanor Conover. The works in this exhibition pay homage to the history of painting while deviating from conventional materials and structural frameworks. The edges of their work defy the bounds of a traditional four-sided canvas: their surfaces bow, bend, fracture, and overlap. While each artist's choice of materials vary—from light sensitive emulsion, corduroy, to marble—, all of the artists have developed their own idiosyncratic visual languages that break down hierarchies between drawing, painting, printmaking, or photography. Their embrace of experimentation and interdisciplinary work is influenced, both directly and indirectly, by the teachings of Josef Albers and the historic Black Mountain College in North Carolina from the 1930s to late 1950s. This exhibition, furthermore, demonstrates how artists continue to iterate, redefine, and reincarnate the history of painting, and proves that painting is far from becoming obsolete.

Susan Weil's work, and her contributions to contemporary art from the past seven decades, serve as the origin point for this exhibition. Weil is a central figure from the 1940s and 50s Abstract Expressionism movement. Her work is known for investigating sequential series and cycles of deconstruction and reconstruction through a range of materials like found objects, recycled canvas, plexiglas, and paint. In 1948, she attended Black Mountain College in North Carolina to study under Josef Albers. It was during one of her summer breaks that she revisited a beloved material from her childhood: blueprints. Blueprints and cyanotypes are synonymous; they describe a photographic process in which a light-sensitive surface is exposed and turned into a deep blue image. Weil introduced this process to her classmate and future husband, Robert Rauschenberg, while the pair was in school. The two artists went on to create a celebrated series of blueprint works together. As of late, Weil has continued her life-long fascination for the medium with collaborator and photographer, José Betancourt. These artists have spent nearly three decades producing work together. Their pieces reimagine the shapes and applications of cyanotypes. In this exhibition, Weil and Betancourt present *Whoosh*, a staggered assemblage of cyanotypes depicting an umbrella in flight. The turbulent construction of the frames and the cropped compositions create a sense of perpetual motion, as if the umbrella is caught in a continuous gust of wind. Like many of Weil and Betancourt's collaborations, the work uses this everyday object to depict the fleetingness and immediacy of both time and their chosen material.

Tomashi Jackson uses visual striations and overlapping structures to create composites of political ephemera centered on social justice issues. Her oftentimes wall-bound work merges the likes of sculpture, painting, printmaking, and photography. She constructs modular columns of canvas and wood that hang from a suspended rod. On it, she renders portraits from archival images using a halftone line, a

painted mark that resembles the appearance of a screen print. Faces emerge, visual and literal picture planes intersect, and color comparisons buzz from the layering of material. This treatment of color is intentional and directly influenced by Josef Alber's concept of "vibrating boundaries." The theory from his book, *Interaction of Color* (1963), argues that color is not absolute, but is rather, dependent on the context that it is in. Jackson uses this aesthetic idea to draw similarities to the rhetoric used in legislative battles to end segregation. "Colored, boundaries, movement, transparency, mixture, purity, restriction, deception, memory, transformation, instrumentation, systems, recognition, psychic effect, placement, quality, and value," are just a few of the words that Jackson cites from Alber's text. In this exhibition, Jackson presents *Life Savers (Nate at the Wedding/ Breion at Home with Bella)*. The colors resemble those of a sunset, with red and white crosshatches intermingled with orange and blue blended backgrounds. The piece marks a pivot in Jackson's subject matter. Rather than sourcing imagery from archives, she has turned to images from her direct community. Infused with tenderness, this piece depicts two friends: one photographed at his brother's wedding, another, an EMT with his cat, Bella, photographed over Facetime. Though we know little about these subjects beyond their names, Jackson invites us into this cross-section of her world.

Like both Jackson and Weil, Eleanor Conover bridges the realms of sculpture and painting. She bows, bevels, and assembles her stretcher bars to form geologically-inspired convex canvases. At times, she exposes her methods, stitching in translucent panels or drawing over structural impressions with a graphite line. In other moments, she obscures her grid with swaths of paint and loose washes of color. Her source of inspiration for these abstract works lies in the relationship between people and land. She looks to granite and marble quarries, coastal regions, and sourced natural materials to construct, what she describes as, "fictional architectural plans." The intermingling of paint and natural material, like granite and marble scraps, are influenced by Josef Alber's material studies. She describes the strange juxtaposition of materials as a sort of "recalibration" exercise for the eye, arguing that our perception of color is not only dependent on surrounding colors, but also the surface it is on. In this exhibition, she presents *From the Steep Slope*, a radiant yellow mirage of citrus and ochre that juts and shrugs to the right, anchored by a long, partially exposed, diagonal cross bar. As a nod to quarries, Conover also straps a marble offshoot to the canvas like an artifact or an object from a fictional collection. Conover intuitively melds these materials with her sun-soaked color palette to provide a window into her investigation of this remote fictitious site where industrialization meets nature.

About the artists

Susan Weil's (b. 1930 in New York, New York) mixed-media works address the plastic quality of time and space through processes of cutting, crumpling and refiguring her compositions. In allowing the viewer's eye to contemplate a series of moments and perspectives at once, Weil generously gives an almost omniscient power to the viewer, as well as a sense not of fractured time, but of a more truthful depiction of genuine experience. Her work is in many major international museum collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York; the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California; the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon; and the Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, North Carolina. Many thanks to Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York.

Tomashi Jackson (b. 1980 in Houston, Texas) combines practices of painting, printmaking, and sculpture with archival research in areas of public infrastructure policy. The work interrogates intersections between formal languages of visual art and political languages driving histories of

segregation, voting rights, education, transportation, labor, and housing in the United States. Considering color as both chromatic and social, Jackson's work embraces compositional abstraction to investigate the interaction of color and its impact on the perceived value of human life in public space.

Jackson's solo museum exhibitions include *Across the Universe* organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver (2023) and traveling to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2024), Tufts University Art Galleries in Medford, PA (2024) and the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (2025-26); *SLOW JAMZ* at the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY (2022); *The Land Claim* at the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York (2021); and *Love Rollercoaster* at The Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2020), among others. Her work was included in the 2019 Whitney Biennial and has been featured in group exhibitions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; High Museum, Atlanta; Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, among others. Her work is included in many public collections, including those of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, The Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, the Perez Museum, Miami and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, among others. She lives and works in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Many thanks to Tilton Gallery, New York.

Eleanor Conover (b. 1988 in Hartford, CT) is an artist whose work engages with the physical and material conditions of painting as a metaphor for environmental time and space. Recent exhibitions include *White Columns*, New York, NY; *Hudson House*, Hudson, NY; *Bad Water*, Knoxville, TN; and *Ortega y Gasset Projects*, Brooklyn, NY. She was the 2022 Donald J. Gordon visiting artist at Swarthmore College, and was the 2020-21 recipient of the Wellesley College Alice C. Cole '42 fellowship. Born in Hartford, CT in 1988, she earned an MFA at Tyler School of Art, Temple University (2018) and a BA from Harvard College (2010). She received a post-MFA teaching fellowship at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and currently lives in Topsham, ME, where she paints and is an Assistant Professor of Visual Art at Bowdoin College. Many thanks to Abattoir, Cleveland, OH.

About Praise Shadows Art Gallery

Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a contemporary art program based in the Boston area with a focus on exceptional artists working in all artistic disciplines. Our worldview is informed by the notion that the artworld's untapped and unrecognized potential is worth cultivating, supporting, and championing. Since our founding in December 2020, the gallery has placed artworks by our artists in esteemed public collections, and our exhibitions have been covered widely in major international media outlets. Our work is grounded by partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in traditional and emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship—exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, and original concepts that no one has ever tried before. www.praiseshadows.com

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