

David Zwirner

New York London Paris Hong Kong

Cy Gavin

23 November–23 December 2021
24 Grafton Street, London



Cy Gavin, *Untitled (Beaver Dam)*, 2021 © Cy Gavin. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by American artist Cy Gavin at the gallery's London location. This will be his first solo presentation in the United Kingdom.

Gavin's monumental paintings feature potent landscapes that serve as conduits for larger themes, including race, memory, and the possibilities of the medium of painting itself. Composed of acrylic and oil and, at times, incorporating a range of unconventional materials, the complex surfaces of these canvases bring together the personal and the collective, powerfully joining points connected to Gavin's own Afro-Caribbean ancestry and American upbringing as well as contested histories in places that he has lived and travelled.

Made during the period of lockdown and civil unrest in America, the paintings in this exhibition largely depict Gavin's immediate surroundings and his property in upstate New York. For the artist, the natural world provided an apt analogue for the transitory and unsettled atmosphere in the country as he was grappling with these issues. Barren trees, a failed man-made dam reinvigorated by beavers, invasive flowers, and an artificial island insinuate notions of boundaries and succession that are also mirrored in the formal qualities of Gavin's paintings with their densely worked, tactile surfaces and shallow illusionistic space, at once inviting and withholding to the viewer.

In one group of paintings, Gavin expands upon his long-standing interest in the illusory nature of colour, invoking an optical phenomenon known as the Purkinje effect, which describes the shift in sensitivity of the human eye to favour blue tones in low light conditions. Working upstate, Gavin began to notice how at dusk certain colours would intensify and others would recede and wanted to replicate in his paintings the way in which the eye receives and mixes colour. By creating works intended for specific lighting conditions, Gavin imbues his canvases with a temporal dimension. In *Untitled (Stars)* (2021), nearly ten metres (more than thirty feet) in length, an entire cosmos seems to unfurl, streaking across the night sky. Likewise, blue-toned waves and the moon hover between abstraction and figuration, flatness and depth, underscoring the larger gravitational forces and tidal shifts that are invisibly at work on us all.

Born 1985 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Cy Gavin received a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh (2007), and an MFA from Columbia University, New York (2016). He currently lives and works in upstate New York.

The artist's first museum solo exhibition was on view at the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, in 2021. Other solo presentations of his work have been held at Sargent's Daughters, New York (2015 and 2016); VNH Gallery, Paris (2018); and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York (2019).

Gavin's paintings have also been included in notable group exhibitions, such as *High Anxiety: New Acquisitions*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2016); *The Lure of the Dark: Contemporary Painters Conjure the Night*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts (2018); *Between the Waters*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2018); and *Relations: Diaspora and Painting*, Phi Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montreal (2020).

Gavin's work is found in prominent public collections, including the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, and the Rubell Museum, Miami.

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