

ADAM MACARTHUR

2024 MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

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5th Floor Student Center May 6–28, 2024

The 2024 MFA Thesis Exhibition features the thesis works of the MFA candidates in Columbia College Chicago's Art I Design and Photography Departments. The exhibition, which includes paintings, prints, drawings, photography, sound, and installation, captures the extensive research, exploration, critical analysis, creative inquiry, productivity, practice, and achievement these emerging artists have maintained throughout their time in the programs. With varied approaches to subject matter, distinct methods of creation, and a unique blending of personal, political, and historical narratives, the artists in this show weave together the nuanced strands of the contemporary moment.

Participating Artists: Andre Barker Jr, Nora Benjamin, Callie Clark Wiren, Noah Fodor, Eli Giclas, Ash Huse, Hillary Irene Johnson, Adam MacArthur, Giselle Mira-Diaz, Grace Papineau-Couture, Arrietta van der Voort, and andrew vogelpohl

The 2024 MFA Thesis Exhibition is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS), the Art I Design Department, and the Photography Department.

ADAM MACARTHUR

Adam MacArthur creates paintings that are depictions of temporal phenomena in nature through means of gestural abstraction in paint. Painterly gestures become depictions of wind and light as it activates natural spaces. By enlarging these phenomena to a focal point, MacArthur draws attention to the forces that create natural environments and the internal associations that come with them.

Adam MacArthur is originally from Tallahassee Florida. Growing up in a heavily forested area MacArthur formed a deep relationship with nature and the outside world that goes back to early in my childhood. This turned into an intense desire to be a part of and gain understanding of the natural forces that drive the world. MacArthur graduated from the University of Kansas in 2016 with a degree in Strategic Communications then completed the Post-Baccalaureate painting and drawing program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2020. He is currently completing the Masters of Fine Arts and Art History at Columbia College

Website: amacarthurart.com

Instagram: [@a.macarthur_art](https://www.instagram.com/a.macarthur_art)



Catching Daylight, 2023, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"



Catching Daylight (Detail), 2023, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"



Knowing the Moment, 2024, oil on canvas, 60" x 48"



Back From Memories, 2023, oil on canvas, 24" x 20"



Back From Memories (Detail), 2023, oil on canvas, 24" x 20"



Laying in the Grass, 2023, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"



Laying in the Grass (Detail), 2023, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"



To Merge, 2023, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"

INTERVIEW WITH ADAM MACARTHUR

Conducted by Rachel Manlubatan

Rachel Manlubatan: How has your relationship with nature changed from your childhood since focusing your art on the topic? What have you learned about your past and present through oil painting, and how does your use of color and gestural abstraction depict that growth?

Adam MacArthur: Painting has allowed me to explore my relationship with nature in a more in-depth way than before. I don't think it has changed my relationship, I think it has given me a better understanding of what my relationship with nature is and why it is so important to me.

Painting helped me contemplate how my past informs my present and vice-versa. When using memories as subject matter, the way I abstract from them allows them to move through time and gain new associations with new experiences. Much like our memories work.

RM: How do the ideas of light and shadow, and general decisions you make regarding color palettes, evoke the emotions you associate with the outside world? Why do you choose to use such organic strokes, and how do other choices in your technique impact the end product and message

AM: The way I approached building out my palette was to use the colors that I enjoy the most in terms of my favorite colors aesthetically and the colors I like to work with the most when painting. I think that this gives the paintings a certain optimism when looking at them, that I also get from my relationship with the outside world. The act of painting is a very fun and exploratory process for me as the maker. I want this to show through the palette and the marks I use to make the paintings to the viewer. The sense of exploration that I get from painting as well as being outside is really

what drives the work and the message I want to convey with it.

RM: As you make natural scenes more active by focusing on the engagement of senses and the presence of light, what do you think audiences will take away from your work? How do you think their unique, firsthand experiences can change the identity of your pieces?

AM: The whole idea when deciding to focus on the engagement of the senses rather than a defined place was to give the audience the opportunity to create their own relationship to the scenes depicted. I didn't want to tell the viewer how to engage with the paintings as the maker but rather give them the platform to draw from those firsthand experiences.

RM: What do you define as a "space," and what do you define as a "place"? How do your focused compositions and material choices in paint strengthen this distinction?

AM: For me space is a nonspecific spatial environment. I think about sense driven experiences such as looking up at the sky, it could happen anywhere there isn't any specific details to give a sense of place to the person's experience. Whereas with a sense of place there is a level of specificity that sets it apart from the rest of the world.

It is important for me to position my work in a sense of space rather than place. The level of detail I give to a scene has to be just right so that it doesn't become specific enough to become a place. I can use the big gestural marks that blend together and blur the distinction between what is what so it all presents itself as a singular environment.



THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series and graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: colum.edu/deps

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Columbia College Chicago Student Center
754 S. Wabash Ave., Fifth Floor, Chicago, IL 60605
Gallery hours: Monday–Saturday 9 a.m.–5 p.m.