

ACQUAVELLA GALLERIES

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Damian Loeb: *A Landscape Retrospective*

Acquavella Galleries, Palm Beach

On view November 4 – December 5, 2023

Artist Reception November 30, 2023



Damian Loeb, *The Mean Reds*, 2008. Oil on linen, 12 x 24 inches.

Palm Beach, FL - Acquavella Galleries is pleased to present *A Landscape Retrospective* by Damian Loeb, the artist's fifth solo exhibition with Acquavella and first in Palm Beach. The exhibition features nineteen paintings from a period spanning fifteen years of the artist's practice in a focused survey that explores his ongoing engagement with landscapes from 2007 to today. The show also debuts new works from the artist's *Wishful Thinking* series, a body of work which references Baroque ideals and follows the long tradition of allegorical painting throughout art history, engaging with visual memories and curiosity about the extraterrestrial realm as a meditation on sex and death, and fear and hope. *A Landscape Retrospective* is on view from November 4–December 5, 2023 at Acquavella's Palm Beach location.

Loeb's engagement with landscape and technology has developed throughout his practice, offering a tracked interest in how the traditional representation of the Earth evolves into a post-terrestrial world. *Final Destination* (2007), borrowing its title from the horror franchise of the same name, juxtaposes urban lights with rural dusk, darkened earth with a kaleidoscopic sky, and a technologic vantage against the allegorical horizon. In this early landscape, Loeb offers a human view of the celestial allowed by technology, rendering the human perspective only possible through the mechanical. Even in a more grounded example such as *The Halo Effect* (2009), the connection between the observed and the built environment progresses. The grid-like windows of the buildings, ballooned by the orange glow of interior

and street lighting, shorten from the high plane of observation. The built environment, retracting from the cliché of rendering skyscrapers as mountains, becomes miniscule when the human eye is elevated above the edifices that once marked the height of progress.



Damian Loeb, *The Halo Effect*, 2009. Oil on linen, 12 x 24 inches.

For his latest *Wishful Thinking* series, Loeb uses multiple image databases from government space agencies to source his material. Mimicking the spirituality of ecclesial art, Loeb appropriates the ethos of *acheiropoieta*—Christian icons not made by human hands but miraculously, divinely created. Beginning his compositions away from the canvas, Loeb digitally alters the detail-rich images captured from telescopes and satellites, furthering their abstraction as he translates the celestial surfaces into oils. He layers paint with the visual distortions found in photography such as shallow depths of field, wide aspect ratios, and lens flares. The mediation of technology provides opportunities to reference the precision of photographs, but through Loeb’s painterly gestures he moves away from verisimilitude into a universal, uncanny realism.

Damian Loeb shares: “These paintings speak to our desire for a transcendental experience, to find the familiar elsewhere, in a remote view, in another place, that is untouched by human hands. My paintings are a form of ‘wishful thinking’, to help us find our place in the infinite, to regain our lost hope, by anthropomorphizing the vast and mysterious images of other worlds, seemingly familiar and better than our own.”

Negotiating a rich history of landscapes, Loeb’s latest paintings transcend the genre to the extraterrestrial, engaging the sublime in a gravitas similar to that of early-nineteenth-century painters. Awe and reverence for the natural world populate the surfaces of his paintings, reflecting upon nature, technology, and its intersections in our current times. In Baroque gestures, the colorful cloud bands encircling Jupiter, speckled stars in the far-off distance, and the unyielding void offer metaphors for both our proximity and remoteness. Connected to ecclesiastical doctrine, *Immaculate Conception* (2023) finds a shared

spirituality between Jupiter's swirling blue and red clouds and The Virgin Mary's divinity. Speaking to our twenty-first-century consciousness, rather than the religious iconography that provided salvation to the masses in earlier times, here the iconography is of a celestial body that resembles the Virgin Mary. Informed by the isolation of the Pandemic, the crossing between the spiritual and celestial heightens the need for an escape to worlds beyond our own terrestrial borders.

Loeb's landscapes embrace an escapist philosophy. Capturing familiar moments of shared human experience, the artist explores the relationship between interior memories and tropes from contemporary visual culture. Revealing the sense of the universal and the uncanny that exists in our collective unconscious, Loeb takes these resonant, emotional "peak experiences" and distills them into contemplative paintings. By manipulating the language of contemporary photography and subverting the notions of a platonic ideal, Loeb dissects and recomposes life as witnessed through the mind of an artist, the eye of a cinematographer, and the hand of a painter.

About Damian Loeb

Damian Loeb (b. 1970) is a self-taught American artist whose practice spans a variety of media and disciplines. After being discovered by Jeffrey Deitch, Loeb had his first solo show at Mary Boone Gallery, New York, in 1999, and subsequent solo shows at White Cube, London; Mario Diacono Gallery, Boston; Jablonka Galerie, Cologne; Acquavella Galleries, New York; and Pace Gallery, Palo Alto. In 2006, the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, in Ridgefield, Connecticut, held a retrospective of his work. He is currently co-represented by Acquavella Galleries and Pace Gallery and is engaged in an ongoing artist residency with the Yale University Center for Collaborative Arts and Media. He lives and works in New York City.

About Acquavella Galleries

For over 100 years, Acquavella Galleries has dealt in paintings, sculptures, and works on paper of unparalleled quality. Renowned for its expertise in the fields of 19th, 20th, and 21st century art, the gallery has sold important paintings and sculpture to private collectors and museums world-wide and regularly presents museum-quality exhibitions of Impressionist, modern, postwar, and contemporary masters. Founded by Nicholas Acquavella in the early 1920s, the gallery is now a third-generation, family-owned business, run by Bill, Eleanor, Nicholas, and Alexander Acquavella: Bill joined his father Nicholas in 1960, Bill's daughter Eleanor joined in 1997, and his sons Nicholas and Alexander joined in 2000 and 2003 respectively.

Today, the gallery exhibits and deals in works by artists such as Francis Bacon, Jean Michel-Basquiat, Pierre Bonnard, Alexander Calder, Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Willem de Kooning, Lucian Freud, Alberto Giacometti, Jasper Johns, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, Wayne Thiebaud, and Andy Warhol, among the other giants of the late 19th, 20th, and early 21st century. On the primary market, the gallery represents contemporary artists Miquel Barceló, Wang Yan Cheng, Jacob El Hanani, Damian Loeb, and Tom Sachs.

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