

## Tsai-Ling Tseng

### Small Paintings

22 February – 23 March 2024

*There is a logic of colours, and it is with this alone, and not with the logic of the brain, that the painter should conform. –Paul Cezanne*

From Brooklyn to Taipei, with significant stops in Providence and Chicago, *Small Paintings* represents a kind of cartography of the artist's recent life. It is as though in the act of painting Tseng has pulled out every colour hidden within the iridescent ridge of an abalone shell. The results bear a distinctive chromatic signature, both pearlescent and dreamy. The picture plane takes on an oceanic fluidity as interiors and landscapes blur together and the space of the conscious dream emerges. Narrative is as memory constructs it, nonlinear and in the free flow of imaginative association. This body of work is about finding the light and being guided through passages of experience.

Many of these paintings reflect the journey from one psychic state to another as well as that of physical relocation, as the colours shift from cool to warm tones across the canvases. There is celebration in the movement from the darkness of uncertainty to the warmth and light of friendship, as the simple yet transformative joy of homecoming recurs. Tseng has created a very particular mood with her palette, one that is not engineered but imagined, rich yet subtly modulated pastels, arrived at through her hand's intuition.

The screen becomes another sky we dream into and reach through in *Inside the Orb*. The lunate celestial body that gazes down upon the central figure is the artist's vision of her mother as they chat through the computer screen. In the moment of connection between mother and daughter, the physical and temporal distance between them collapses. From New York to Taipei and Taipei to New York, the future dissolves into the past and the past into the future. How Tseng imagines this happening embraces the ordinary mystery of life as it is now, as the globe can be spanned within a matter of hours and we can see and hear each other across continents instantaneously through the medium of the internet. The painter dreams alongside technology and while that technology is part of the historical moment, it is not all that defines it. Tseng posits that the technology of the era need not alienate us from the rest of human history as she depicts what it feels like to simply be with it. It is through that feeling, as held in the imagination, that the possibility of continuity with what has come before makes itself known.

Friends and family, lost and present, populate this body of work. In *Dusk to Dawn*, not only do several generations commingle, transcending the barrier of death, but two versions of the artist's self. The one contemporaneous with the painting's creation sits at her desk while her child self sleeps alongside her siblings in one corner. This work contemplates how our childhood echoes within our minds and how as adults we carry our child selves within us. We also carry our ancestors and their familiars. While we may have never met them on the physical plane, they too live on as we are connected to the world past and future through the medium of consciousness, through our familial networks, and through shared memories. Our interrelated condition as a species creates constellations in the sky of the collective unconscious. With *Small Paintings*, Tseng envisions the shape her region of that constellation takes.

Though mankind made machines, we are not machines. We are not algorithmically defined. We are wild animals that dream. We still scan our inner and outer skies for signs.

– Elizabeth Moylan