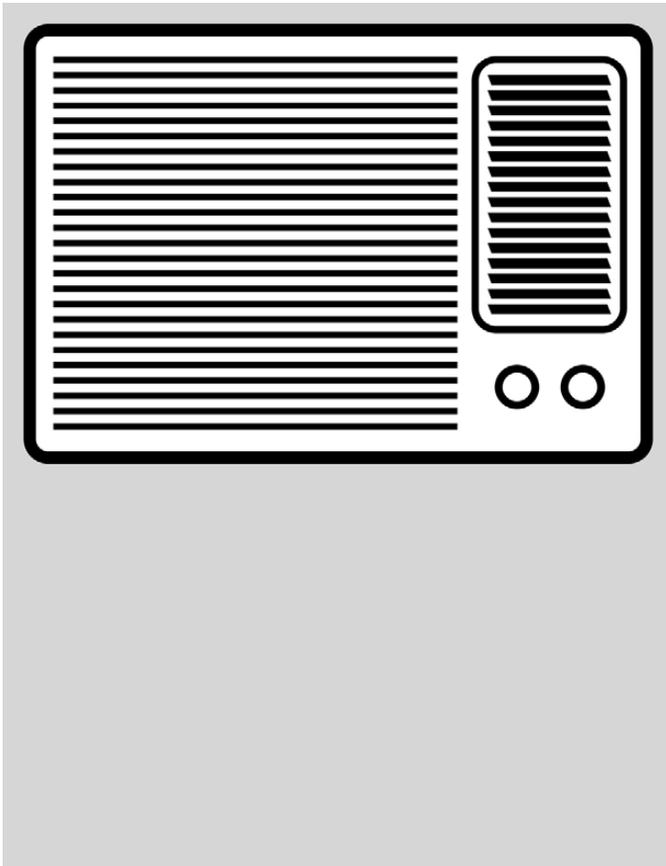


GAGOSIAN

Gagosian to Present New Paintings and a Sculpture by Adam McEwen

Execute Is the Gallery's First Solo Exhibition of the Artist's Work in New York

Opening at 980 Madison Avenue on March 18, 2022



Adam McEwen, *Air Conditioner*, 2022 © Adam McEwen

NEW YORK, March 16, 2022—Gagosian is pleased to present *Execute*, an exhibition of new paintings and a sculpture by Adam McEwen. Opening on March 18, 2022, this will be the gallery's first solo exhibition of his work in New York.

The thrust of the exhibition hinges on the divergent meanings of its title: to carry out or act, on the one hand, and to extinguish or erase, on the other. McEwen's work establishes a tension between these two countervailing forces: the optimistic impulse to act and grow, and the threat of oblivion.

The nexus of this tension lies in a sculpture installed at the exhibition's center. Titled *Execution Block* (2022), it is a slightly larger-than-life-size depiction of a medieval chopping block, complete with a worn slab on which to place the victim's neck, an almost comically threatening axe, and the cobblestones of ye olde torture chamber—all made with fiberglass, in the style of plastic children's toys. Playful in kelly green and tree-house brown, it nevertheless exudes a thinly veiled menace. It begs several questions—among them, Who is being beheaded? And who is doing the beheading?

Surrounding *Execution Block* are paintings of near human scale dominated by a palette in varying tones of gray acrylic paint. A group of these paintings portray metal springs—devices that suggest tension and its release—in the mode of schematic drawings. One of them, *Compressed Spring #1* (2022), shows its subject squeezed down on itself, flattened. In another, *Spring at Rest* (2022), the coil sits at ease, only slightly constricted. Others are more open—in the act of expanding, perhaps. To the extent that they imply rebounding, these paintings are optimistic. Their diagrammatic visual language brings to mind the deceptive simplicity of early Roy Lichtenstein or the mechanical drawings appropriated by the Dadaists. The paintings are made as carefully as they need to be, using straightforward methods involving pencil, ruler, and masking tape.

Rendered in a related style to the springs are images of an air conditioner—an object McEwen has employed several times in his work—and ballpoint pens. Taller than a tall person, and thinner, the pens evoke action, expression, and language—but also, ordered in a column, troops marching. Like the springs, they are in motion, busy, taking in and expending energy. These objects analogize human emotions and actions: the springs alternately relaxed or tense and the ink levels of the pens revealing their potential lifespans.

An additional group of paintings interprets the style of sketched line drawings, fusing a sense of earnest, playful spontaneity with mordant wit. Representing an oncoming train, a boat departing the canvas, a cut tree sprouting new growth, and a written agenda, these paintings invoke themes of threat, escape, resilience, planning, and execution. Together with the exhibition's other works, they attempt to gauge the emotional temperature of the world into which they were recently brought.

In a separate gallery is *Six Foot Two Eyes of Blue* (2022), a geometric abstraction on a pair of circular canvases that is a surrogate for human presence, and perhaps self-portraiture. McEwen has also returned, for the first time in nearly a decade, to his ongoing series of obituaries of still-living people, paying homage to the climate activist Greta Thunberg, the spiritual leader Sadhguru, and the tech philosopher Jaron Lanier. Interrogating our perceptions of public figures, they suggest the ever more blurred line between history and fiction, while proposing a position of optimism in the face of oblivion.

Adam McEwen was born in 1965 in London and lives and works in New York. Collections include the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, CT; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; de la Cruz Collection, Miami; Museo Jumex, Mexico City; Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf, Germany; Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums, Scotland; and Arts Council Collection, London. In 2010, McEwen curated *Fresh Hell* at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, for the annual Carte Blanche series. Exhibitions include the Goss-Michael Foundation, Dallas, TX (2012); Museo Civico-Diocesano di Santa Maria dei Servi, Città della Pieve, Italy (2015); *I Think I'm in Love*, Aspen Art Museum, CO (2017); and *10, Feels Like 2*, Lever House, New York (2019).

#AdamMcEwen

ADAM MCEWEN

Execute

Opening reception: Friday, March 18, 6–8pm

March 18–April 23, 2022

980 Madison Avenue, New York

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