

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Staff. "Sky Glabush: *The Letters of this Alphabet Were Trees*," Stephen Friedman Gallery, New York, NY
September 5 - October 17, 2024



Sky Glabush
The letters of this alphabet were trees, 2024
Oil and sand on canvas
108 x 84 in
274.3 x 213.4 cm

Stephen Friedman Gallery presents *The letters of this alphabet were trees*, an exhibition of new paintings by Canadian artist Sky Glabush, marking his New York debut. Based in the countryside near London, Ontario, Glabush is celebrated for his brilliantly colored landscapes depicting forests, fields, flowers, sea and sky. In these familiar yet stylized scenes, the exploration of color, light and form is mediated through the use of texture, resulting from mixing sand and oil paint.

The exhibition's title is borrowed from Seamus Heaney's poem *Alphabets*, in which a young child leaves the classroom and discovers that tree branches form words and phrases. Mirroring Heaney's depiction of 'each strange letter' shaping one's view of the world, Glabush's images serve as forms and leitmotifs rather than literal representations; they carry historical and emotional content that tap into our collective consciousness, triggering new meanings and responses along the way.



Sky Glabush
Every wild bluebell, 2024
Oil and sand on canvas
20 x 24 in
50.8 x 61 cm
20.5 x 24.5 in (framed)
52.1 x 62.2 cm

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In *Early Light at Roblin Lake* (2024), the artist's largest painting to date, Glabush suffuses the monumental composition with red and ochre trees that simultaneously obscure and reveal an expansive seascape resplendent with radiating beams of sunlight. Here—and throughout the exhibition—the artist uses the landscape as a place to explore the expressive possibilities of familiar forms rendered unfamiliar. The scale and composition of *Early Light at Roblin Lake* (2024) is reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's breakthrough *Mural* (1943), and the verticality of trees echo the straight lines in Barnett Newman's "zips" in *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* (1950-51). Other paintings in the show bring to mind Monet's late paintings of water lilies and Van Gogh's swirling, ecstatic fields of sunflowers and night skies. As the artist reflected in a recent interview, "I live and breathe modernist history, especially the moment leading up to abstraction, when the image was being destroyed, distilled, invented, and transformed, but was still an image."



Sky Glabush
Early light at Roblin Lake, 2024
Oil and sand on canvas, 2-part
84 x 96 in (each)
213.4 x 243.8 cm
84 x 192 in (installed)
213.4 x 487.7 cm

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Sky Glabush
Garden painting, 2024
Oil and sand on canvas
18 x 14 in
45.7 x 35.6 cm
18.6 x 14.5 in (framed)
47.3 x 36.8 cm

Over the last decade, Glabush has developed physically rigorous and experimental techniques to expand the limits of painting. The artist's methodical, innovative process of mixing sand and oil paint enhances the play of light and materiality in the paintings; the texture transforms two-dimensional painting into a form of relief sculpture that pays homage to modernist strategies, craft and experimentation. For Glabush, expanding the boundaries of contemporary painting involves exploring the shift between these two genres. In this context, the materials themselves become key conceptual elements, embodying ideas of chance and transformation.

Sky Glabush (b. 1970 Alert Bay, BC) received his BFA from the University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, SK) and his MA from the University of Alberta (Edmonton, AB). Sky Glabush's work is the subject of upcoming and recent solo exhibitions at Philip Martin Gallery (Los Angeles, CA) and Stephen Friedman Gallery (New York, NY; London, UK). Glabush's paintings are in the collection of the National Gallery of Canada, where they were recently on view. Glabush's group shows include, "Pocket Universe," at Philip Martin Gallery (Los Angeles, CA), "The Moth & The Thunderclap," Modern Art (London, UK, 2023); "BodyLand," Galerie Max Hetzler (Berlin, Germany, 2022); "Unnatural Nature: Post-Pop Landscapes," Acquavella (New York, NY, 2022); "Sky Glabush and Johannes Nagel," Cordonhaus Städtische Galerie Museum (Cham, Germany); "The Valley of Love," Clint Roenisch Gallery (Toronto, ON); "Sky Glabush," Projet Pangée (Montreal, QC); and "The Window is Also a Door," Prosjektrom Normanns (Stavanger, Norway). Glabush's work has been included in exhibitions at University of Western Ontario (London, ON); Galerie de l'UQAM (Montréal, QC); and Rideau Hall (Ottawa, ON). Glabush is an associate professor of visual art at the University of Western Ontario (London, ON). Glabush's work is included in such collections as Harvard Museums (Cambridge, MA), National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, ON); Alberta Foundation for the Arts (Calgary, AB); Bank of Montreal (Toronto, ON); Burnaby Art Gallery (Burnaby, BC); Colart Collection (Montreal, QC); Ivey Collection (Toronto and London, ON); MacKenzie Art Gallery (Regina, SK); McIntosh Gallery, (London, ON); McMichael Canadian Art Collection (Vaughan, Ontario); Mendel Art Gallery (Saskatoon, SK); Museum London (London, ON); University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, SK). His work has been featured in publications such as Tate Magazine, Border Crossings, Canadian Art, Toronto Star, and Globe and Mail. Glabush lives and works in London, ON.

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