

Aunelia

Galerie ISA is thrilled to welcome artist Gabriel Mills (b.1992, New Rochelle, New York) for his first solo showcase in Mumbai titled '*Aunelia*.'

The title is a continuation of Mills' unique naming language tradition that involves both a rearrangement of words according to formal properties to invoke both a rhythmic and visual structure. The titles also set an understanding of Mills' practice; in fact, they are inextricably aligned. Just as the titles resist linguistic interpretation, Mills' practice resists categorization, both extending an inquiry into how meaning is created.

How does something become? This question unfolds into a large narrative and the tension and contradictions—instinct and intention, structure and impulse, materiality and atmosphere, being and becoming—begin to emerge. Painting for Mills is not a language imposed, nor one that needs to be interpreted or unlocked.

In his works and his practice, Mills seeks a state where contradictions are inhabited simultaneously. Through the materiality of diptychs and triptychs, he allows paradoxes to animate the works. Some panels reflect a continuity of thought, their boundaries dissolved, while others unfold into the next, bringing divergent elements into dialogue. As the density and topography of his paintings intensified, Mills moved from canvas to wood panels six years ago, working with a craftsman to develop a cleat system capable of supporting their weight. He prepares each panel himself, "to ensure they can withstand whatever journey each piece might take."

A highlight of Mills' oeuvre is his chromatic richness. In *Irelune*, it's the magnificence of purple, long associated with vibrational spirituality and a transcendental realm. A central, saturated panel of smooth pigment provides an almost meditative contrast to the ridges, folds, and highly energetic outer panels, the eye absorbing the depth and the intensity as it travels from the earthly to the galactic. In *Auie*, cerulean edges visually recede; swirling whirlpools of pigment descending into an elusive calm, seemingly just out of reach. In *Qoa*, disparate palettes (not unlike natural) elements collide, almost as though they were individual works brought together, their radically different material languages pushing the pendulum from one extreme to another. In these works, color is not merely descriptive but a force field in itself—attracting, repelling, dispersing. Mills notes, "I continue to study color to be present to it, to mix it, and to make color studies as a practice of knowing how to land precisely where my intuition wants to go. It is something to be trained. Each decision informs the next."

His practice is rooted in curiosity, where intention and discovery remain in constant exchange. Working primarily with oil on wood, he pushes the limits of paint, manipulating viscosity, density, oxidation, accumulation, letting the material action determine as much of the surface as his hand. His alchemy is based in the discovery—excess oil warps into ridges and crevices, thick deposits of slower drying pigments are excavated, marks and mishaps are recorded and layered, erased and highlighted—creating a dense topography with an organic complexity that is inherent to the work itself.

Geometry and gesture, order and intuition, the visceral and the physical, excess and restraint, the atmospheric and the agitated are all in constant negotiation in a process that Mills describes as 'being with paint'. But herein lies the paradox at the heart of Mills' work: a continuous loop of creation, contradiction and questioning. Through scale, technique and material, Mills does not seek understanding or resolution, nor does he ask the viewer to unlock a singular interpretation. Instead, the paintings are allowed to hold and retain a state of being—to exist within a continuum of matter, life and form, remaining in constant motion.

Gabriel Mills received an MFA in Painting and Printmaking from the Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT and a BFA in Illustration and Art History from the University of Hartford, Hartford, CT. The artist's work is held in several important public collections including: The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS; The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; New York Historical Society, NY; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; X Museum of Contemporary Art, Beijing, CH, amongst several others. His work has been included in group presentations at the Museum of African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA; Museu Inimá De Paula, Minas Gerais, Brazil; the Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

Priyanka R. Khanna