

Sean Landers, Emily Mae Smith, and Livia Russell, “Work in Progress: Sean Landers and Emily Mae Smith,” *Frieze*, August 27, 2024.

FRIEZE

Work in Progress: Sean Landers and Emily Mae Smith

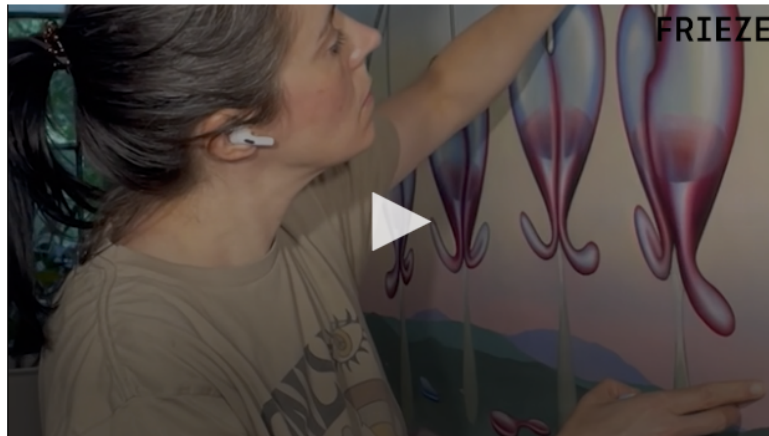
Showing new paintings with Petzel at Frieze Seoul 2024, the two artists discuss their studio rituals, and what sustains their practices

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BY SEAN LANDERS, EMILY MAE SMITH AND LIVIA RUSSELL IN FRIEZE SEOUL, INTERVIEWS | 27 AUG 24



At Frieze Seoul, Petzel (New York) debuts new works by Sean Landers and Emily Mae Smith. Working in oil paint, Landers and Smith stretch the surreal potential of the natural world, both influenced by René Magritte's works on paper. They talk about the new, cumulative directions of their practices: Smith has finally begun to paint the 'bleeding hearts' plants that have long occupied her imagination, and Landers has fused two subjects that he has explored independently for decades, animals and writing.



Livia Russell Can you talk about your new work for Frieze Seoul?

Emily Mae Smith Two of my new paintings for Frieze Seoul are centred around plant and fungus life forms.

Petzel

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These forms become metaphorical bodies within the paintings; allegorical containers for the painting’s subjects, functioning in a similar way to historical symbolism and surrealism. These are long-running influences in my work. In past paintings, I have incorporated other plant forms such as ginkgo leaves and iris flowers.

Sean Landers I am showing works from a new series, which I debuted in Paris at the Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature in October 2023 and more recently in London at Timothy Taylor Gallery. It combines two ongoing series into one: animal portraits and aspen trees with arborglyphs, or tree carvings. I have been painting animals for many years, and for decades I have incorporated writing into oil painting. This series is a combination of both of these things and was a marriage waiting to happen.



Sean Landers's studio. Courtesy: the artist and Petzel, New York

‘I plan to stay the course. To be honest about what I want to paint and write.’ – Sean Landers

Petzel

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Reference images in Emily Mae Smith's studio. Courtesy: the artist and Petzel, New York

LR Are there new sources of inspiration in your current work?

EMS One of the new paintings is based on the bleeding hearts plant, which I have long admired, and finally thought to incorporate into my work. I find this plant devastatingly poetic. In the spring, bushes of it grow near my Brooklyn studio.

SL My inspiration is self-generative. New bodies of work that I devise are usually combinations of older series of mine, as is the case here.

Petzel

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Sean Landers's studio. Courtesy: the artist and Petzel, New York

LR What does your day in the studio look like right now?

EMS I show up in the morning before 10am. If I have already done my sketchbook drawings and made some decisions about what I want to work on, I immediately go to painting. Usually, I have some specific colours in mind; I start mixing to capture those. I am painting with a lot of channelled intuition now and am not looking at a reference until I really need it. I try not to touch the computer or look at any emails until later in the afternoon.

I have recently divided my practice between two different cities and locations so that I could have more privacy while I am painting, yet also be able to continue having meetings and visitors.

‘I’ve been working in deep solitude. The studio is sacred for me.’ – Emily Mae Smith

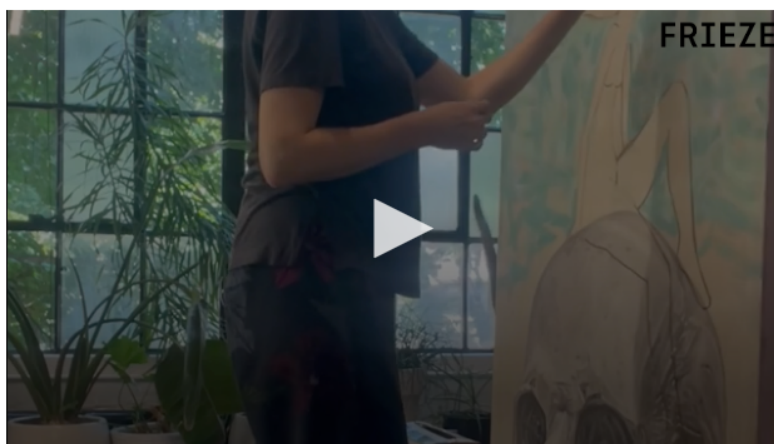
Petzel

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Sean Landers in his studio. Courtesy: the artist and Petzel, New York

SL My studio is in the same building that I live in, so I can come and go throughout the day. A normal day would be – wake up, drink coffee and then get to work (often while listening to an audiobook), until the call of wine brings me back upstairs to end my day with a glass.



LR How do you see your practice developing?

Petzel

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EMS I’ve been working in deep solitude for the past month with no visitors or anyone else in the room. The studio is sacred for me. This is rather new, and I am really enjoying it.



Emily Mae Smith work in progress, showing *grisaille* layer and glazed colours layers. Courtesy: the artist and Petzel, New York

SL I plan to stay the course. That course is to be as honest as possible with myself about what I want to paint and write and to do exactly that. To never get bored or get off track. To make paintings that I would want to hang above my favourite chair.



Sean Landers's studio. Courtesy: the artist and Petzel, New York

Petzel

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Further Information

Frieze Seoul, COEX, 4 – 7 September 2024.

Limited tickets for Frieze Seoul are now on sale – don’t miss out, buy yours now. Alternatively, become a member to enjoy premier access, multi-day entry, exclusive guided tours and more.

A dedicated online Frieze Viewing Room opens in the week before the fair, offering audiences a first look at the presentations and the ability to engage with the fair remotely.

For all the latest news from Frieze, sign up to the newsletter at **frieze.com**, and follow **@friezeofficial** on Instagram, **X** and **Frieze Official** on Facebook.

Main Image: Work in progress in Emily Mae Smith’s studio. Courtesy: the artist and Petzel, New York

<https://www.frieze.com/article/work-progress-sean-landers-and-emily-mae-smith>