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Jason Saager *Sky Gardens*

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Working out of the expansive and arid beauty of the southwestern United States, Jason Saager approaches the subject of landscape through combined artistic processes of printmaking and painting. His elaborate environments majestically unfold onto themselves in surreal harmony, accessible only through magical gateways. In *Sky Gardens*, the artist's first solo exhibition at the gallery, these dreamlike works recall a history of representation, where illusionary space has been historically mapped onto the painting's surface in order to articulate distance, perspective, and duration. A window into another world.

Saager's works are a layered process merging the immediacy and technical prowess of printmaking with the slow, studied precision of rendering imagery in paint. Beginning with a monotype as the initial, foundational layer to these works, Saager designates the ground onto which he formally builds his paintings. The artist creates the print by first painting his image on a large cut section of acrylic glass. Then, using his entire bodyweight as the printing press, he impresses the image onto paper creating a unique print as a preliminary sketch to begin to paint from. In cultivating the flora of his imaginative landscapes, Saager layers fine intricate brushwork atop of the print, building up a varied density in the landscape of the image. These short, delicate marks amass a breadth of opacity, pushing space to and from the foreground, while simultaneously framing areas of the translucent, ghostlike print underneath as an exposed geological substrate.

In these works, the industrial density of the city is left behind for the impressing solitude of nature. The verticality of urban space is replaced with Saager's horticulture—tall, slender trees span a layering of sky and land where azure heavens become the tepid lakebeds to the artist's poetic topiary, as seen in *Gravity Optional Countryside* (2022). Clouds become rolling hills and valleys in *Triple Sunrise* (2022), and mountain ranges intersect gardens leading down pathways crossing between alternative worlds in *Subterranean Pathfinder* (2022). Inspired by compositional strategies sourced from naturalist traditions in Italian Renaissance painting, in concert with the meditative incentives of ancient Chinese landscapes, these works evoke distant pasts that marry two distinct cultural conceptions of world building: one of control and one of surrender. Saager's reclusive works offer an internal respite, a chance to recollect, an opportunity to absorb the mystical grandeur and quiet serenity of his worlds, while questioning the very nature of landscape itself.

About the artist:

Jason Saager (born in 1982, Mesa, AZ USA) received his BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2006, and his MFA from Hunter College in New York in 2012. His work has been presented in recent solo and group exhibitions at Ross+Kramer Gallery, East Hampton, NY USA; Richard Heller Gallery, Santa Monica, CA USA; Washington Project for the Arts, Washington DC, USA (curated by Ellen Altfest); St. Paul the Apostle, New York, NY USA (curated by Michael Berube and Keena Gonzales); Life on Mars Gallery, Brooklyn, NY USA; SPRING/BREAK Art Show, New York, NY USA. He has had artist residencies at The International School of Painting, Drawing, and Sculpture, Montecastello di Vibio, Italy; Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, NY USA and Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program, Brooklyn, NY USA. He was the recipient of the Richard Marnin Kaye Award while attending Hunter College.