

Pattern Language

Dana Cromie

Ewan McNeil

May 5 – May 30, 2025

Reception: Sat. May 10, 2-4pm



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This exhibition brings together two artists whose work, while based in different techniques and conceptual concerns, utilize systems of patterning as organizational elements. Both use colour in an intuitive and process-based way, amplifying the patterns and foregrounding the ordering elements within the paintings. Underpinning this exhibition is the idea of Landscape – it's history and meaning across cultures and historical periods.

Dana Cromie's work is influenced by his extensive background in horticulture, extended travels in India and his interest in Persian and Islamic gardens. *Star Gardens* are his most recent body of works, having grown out of his *Woven Views* series, some of which are included in this exhibition. These paintings are conceived using order, geometry, symmetry and pattern, referencing the principles that underlie Persian and Islamic Art and garden design. They are created using a lightly-planned progression of six-fold meditations involving geometric addition and subtraction using pencil, compass, straightedge, eraser, ink and acrylic or oil paint.

These works are a reflection on the balance and order of the natural world, one that can be re-created and given symbolic meaning through art and architecture. The earliest Gardens were regarded as being apart from Nature, and were often physically enclosed by a wall, allowing the garden inside to be conceived and formally structured in a way that set them apart from the unruly wildness of untamed Landscapes. The *Star Gardens* suggest Cromie's interest in a rational, geometric beauty, that, like the classic Islamic Garden, can set itself apart from a chaotic world and achieve a measure of enlightenment and pleasure through unity and order.

Ewan McNeil makes a case for the Internet being a contemporary form of Landscape. This digital space has become, for all intents and purposes, a Landscape that we frequently occupy and interact with and are inspired by. McNeil mines his imagery from this Landscape; this includes realistic, ambiguous objects that form a focus in the paintings, as well as motifs and patterns that link the purposely random elements together. The central object often retains its original form but might be reduced to a shape or an outline, obscuring its original source. Shapes and patterns run through the works employing rhythmic order and high-key, raffish colours, merging with and over/underlying the object, creating a synergetic relationship between object and pattern.

McNeil arranges the elements in the paintings in a collage-like fashion, avoiding any sense of ranked ordering to the individual parts. Wildly varied objects and forms exist side by side, and are given the same aesthetic weight, leading to a sense of flatness, reflecting how we experience the Landscape of the Internet. The creation of artworks that re-locate these objects and patterns in a new aesthetic form through the promiscuous sampling of imagery from a source, that in turn, samples from the real world of things, gives these works frisson and conceptual weight. The intermingling of the digital and the actual is central to the reading of these works, and along with McNeil's 'more is more' technique provides a critique on the aesthetic hierarchy of high and low art.

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