

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021 nightgallery.ca

CYNTHIA DAIGNAULT

Elegy

September 7 – October 19, 2019

Night Gallery is delighted to announce *Elegy*, a monumental solo exhibition by artist Cynthia Daignault. The exhibition will run from September 7 through October 19, 2019, with an opening reception on Saturday, September 7th from 7–10pm. This will be Daignault's first solo show in Los Angeles.

In *Elegy*, Daignault presents a new series of black-and-white paintings exploring environmental collapse. Created in monochrome, Daignault's subjects—trees, glaciers, disasters, and the infamous kiss between Al Gore and Tipper—exist beyond reality, fading into memory, history, and death. Each canvas is an elegy, a metaphor for the contrast between eternal forces: black and white, life and death, love and loss. These works look back to Picasso's *Guernica*, and through Picasso to Robert Motherwell's *Elegies* and Andy Warhol's *Death and Disasters*. As in those precursors, the subject is abject horror—the sickness of bearing witness to an unthinkable global tragedy and the dilemma of how art might make sense of collective trauma. Robert Motherwell described his *Elegies* as “an insistence that a terrible death had happened that should not be forgotten.” Daignault too insists on remembrance, creating each painting as a lament to the passing of the natural world—to the redwood, to the Angel Oak, to the tortoise, and to the unsustainable contemporary life.

Daignault is known for serial works that often involve hundreds of small paintings. In *Elegy*, she takes this practice to a new scale, filling the entire gallery with a continuous line of larger works. Opposing the nihilism of digital image streams, she instead uses groups of images to build overarching narrative. Daignault often compares this process to that of writing poetry; each frame functions like a single word—complete and meaningful unto itself—while the group operates like a poem—able to express more complex ideas and emotions, even those incommunicable in language. This connection to poetry is especially clear in her latest text paintings, *Remember you will die*, appearing here as an epilogue to the image works. The show is hung edge-to-edge, and the effect is filmic. Jump cuts between the bucolic and the tragic recall early cinema like Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*. Daignault positions her work between film and painting, and the references to black-and-white photography are many. Here, Daignault invokes photography as a powerful

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metaphor for loss. A camera captures a transitory moment before it disappears forever, much like a species, or a tree, or a life. Above all, *Elegy* is a American landscape painting show—expressive, painterly, and historical—exploring the contemporary experience of environment. Daignault focuses the work on the paradox between beauty and loss—the essential American irony. The country defines itself through a sublime landscape that its very existence destroys. Memento Mori. Life is beautiful, even as we are dying a little each day.

Cynthia Daignault (b. 1978, Baltimore, MD) received a BA in Art and Art History from Stanford University. She has presented solo exhibitions and projects at many major museums and galleries, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, MASS MoCA, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and White Columns. Her work is in numerous public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Art the Blanton Museum of Art and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Daignault is a regularly published author, and her writings have been published in a range of publications. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including a 2019 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, a 2016 Foundation for the Contemporary Arts Award, a 2011 Rema Hort Foundation Award, and a 2010 Macdowell Colony Fellowship. She lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland.

In conjunction with *Elegy*, Daignault will release her first artist monograph. In 2014, Daignault traveled around America, stopping every 25 miles to paint the view before her. The resulting monumental work, *Light Atlas*, is a grand portrait of America. This new 400-page hardcover book, published by Gregory Miller and Company, documents all 360 paintings of *Light Atlas* with new essays by Alexander Nemerov, David Company, and Cynthia Daignault.