

Modesti Perdriolle Gallery

Samantha McEwen

Exhibition from April 10 to June 29

On the occasion of this exhibition presentation of the first monograph on the life and works of Samantha McEwen from the 1980s to the present day.



Samantha McEwen with a phone customised by Kenny Scharf
Polaroid by Keith Haring New York 1983
© Keith Haring Foundation

Born in London in 1961, Samantha McEwen left her hometown at 17 and moved to New York to study at the School of Visual Arts. There, she met Keith Haring, "the first person I spoke to in class". Fascinated by her lively expression and radiant smile, he asked her to draw her portrait, a sign of his interest and curiosity. Thus began an intense and passionate friendship. They shared an apartment in the East Village, the epicenter of the city's underground district. They were complicit and happy, participating in countless memorable moments of the New York art scene.

With the emergence of hip-hop music and graffiti in the early 80s, New York was in full effervescence of a new culture free from constraints or economic stakes. A new generation of non-academic, often engaged artists, inspired by a culture born in the streets and clubs. "We took full advantage of New York's stimulating energy, life was organized in a natural way, we conveyed our ideas through painting, we wanted to give meaning, what mattered most was having a vision."

At the same time, advertising and graphic design were thriving, the democratization of fashion, in the form of a trend known as the 'Look', was emerging. Samantha gained recognition as a New York personality through her roles as a model and socialite. She appeared in the fashion pages of major magazines, including the New York Times Magazine and Interview. She rubbed shoulders with Jean Michel Basquiat, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Andy Warhol, and posed for Francesco Clemente and Alex Katz. During these years, she had two exhibitions at Tony Shafrazi's gallery, the New York gallery of Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf.



Juan Dubose, Samantha McEwen and Keith Haring, New York, 1982.

Photo Tseng Kwong Chi gelatin silver print 38 x 38 cm 2/25

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In the 90s, many relatives of Samantha disappeared, taken by AIDS or drugs. Between light and shadow, Samantha's life is punctuated by moments of joy and sadness.

In 2015, she took part in a group exhibition organized by the Pace Gallery in London, in tribute to the legendary London art dealer, Robert Fraser. Forty-eight artists were featured, including just three women.

She is one of the few painters whose artistic approach is often inspired by nature on monochrome backgrounds on which appear, a discreet black leopard, a dog howling at the moon, or levitating bird heads. Her art reveals a touching, delicate quest for absolute simplicity. Her work is both captivating and radiant, far removed from artifice and pretense. It aims to eliminate the superfluous and artificial and retain what is essential, what is true.

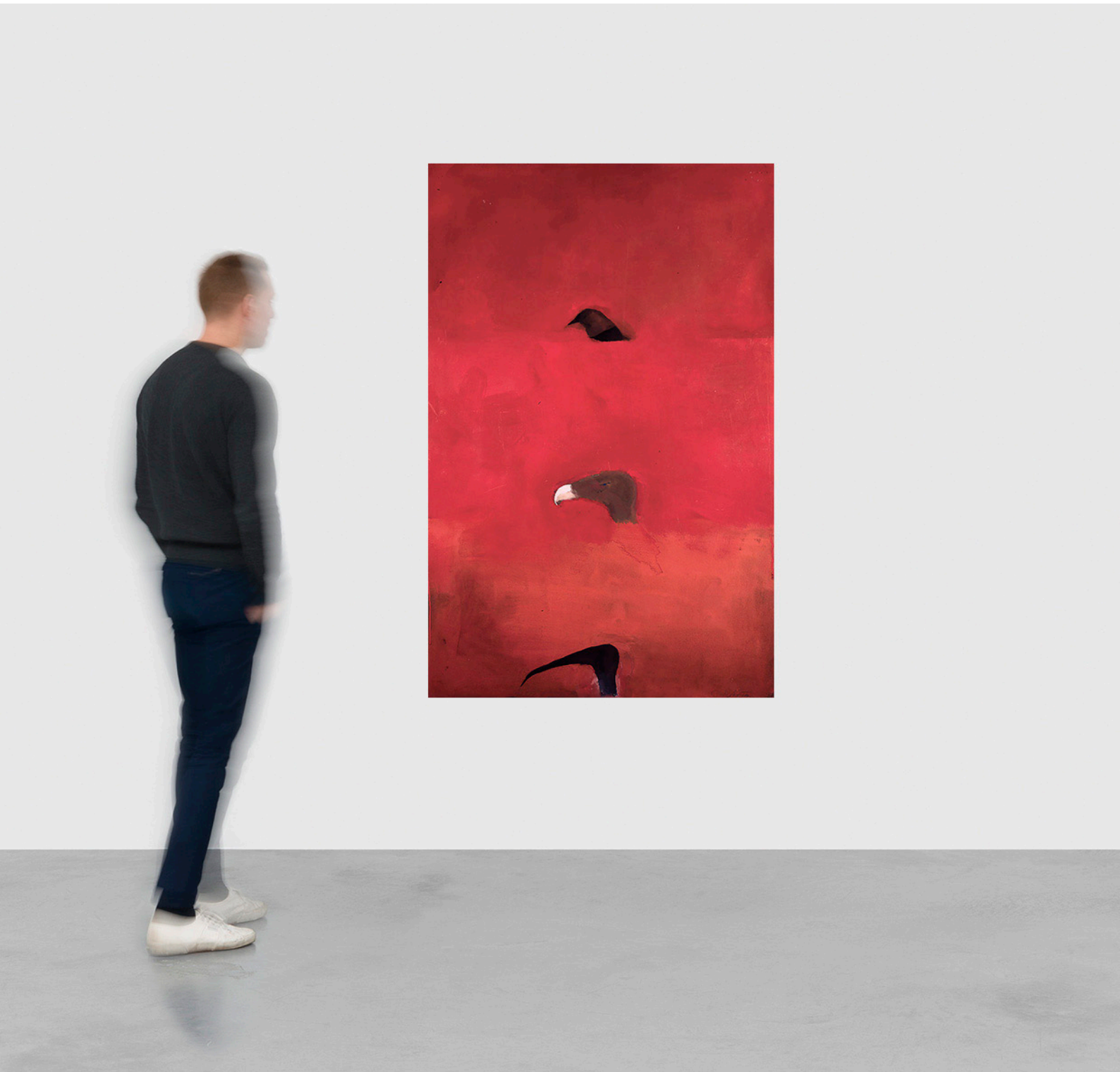
In 2021, Samantha's work was exhibited at Modesti Perdriolle gallery in Brussels. Over the years, she has offered, as she herself underlines, emotional images, poetic shelters, in a restless world full of noise. She invites us to contemplate and listen to the silences that emerge from her works. Her images are windows opening onto inner landscapes, where light, color and form blend to create a soothing harmony. These landscapes of flowers, optimistic, are like a breath of fresh air; these raw tarpaulins are crossed with white clouds full of hope, these iridescent mineral paintings on Japanese paper exalt a soft beauty. A radiant art that goes to the essentials.



Samantha McEwen *Untitled* 1983 house paint on canvas 315 x 145 cm



Samantha McEwen *And the Child Knew* 1985 gouache and acrylic on paper pasted on canvas 122 x 234 cm



Samantha McEwen *Birds Heads on Red* 1993 gouache on paper 152.4 x 101.6 cm



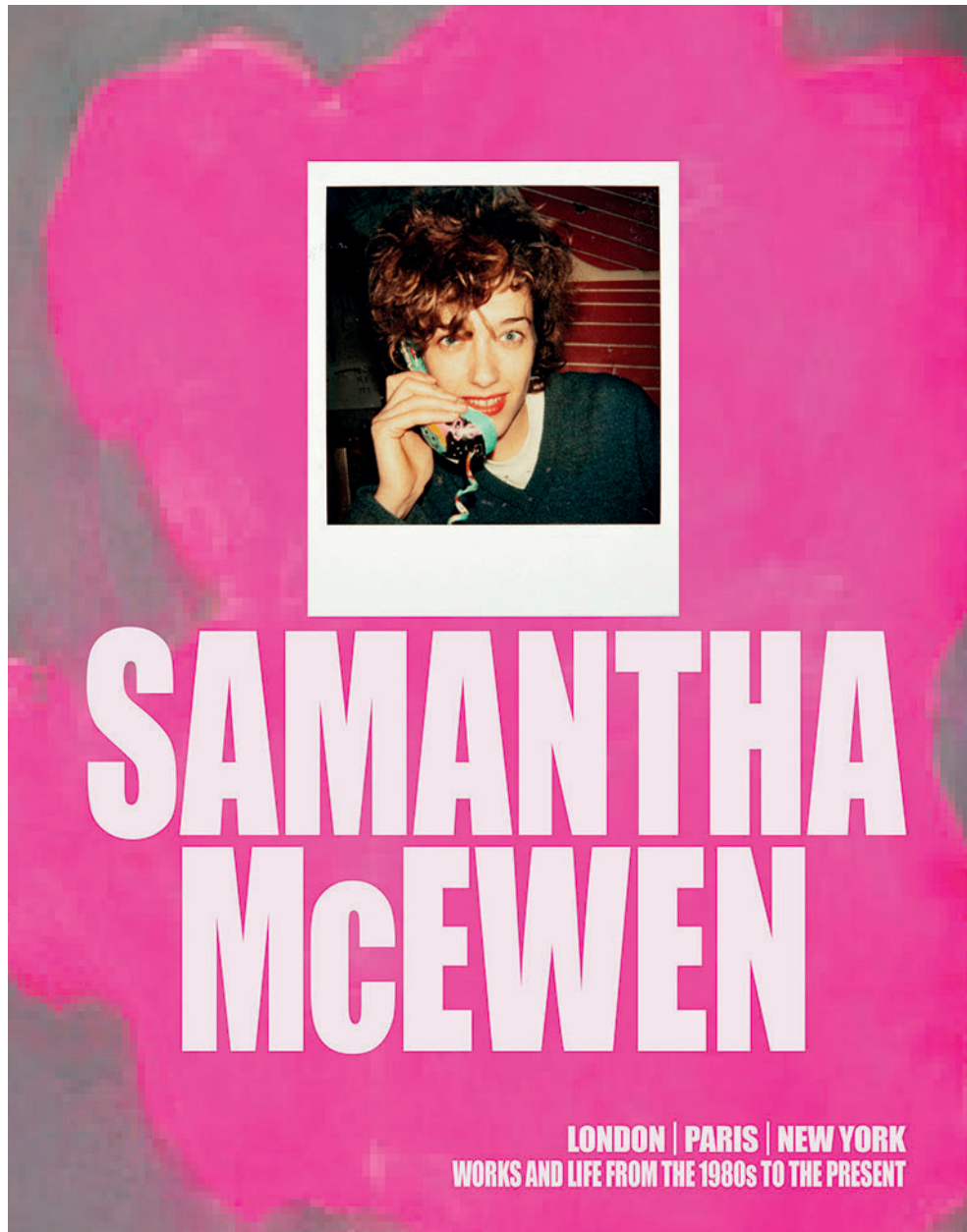
Samantha McEwen *Posy Painting* 2021 acrylic on tarpaulin 172 x 222 cm

The subject in my paintings is, in effect, the research of simplicity. The working away of all excess material to the minimum of an image and there, in the drawing, to find the subject complete. The image intact. The balance from which comes life and motion, the silence unimpeded.

Samantha McEwen, New York, 1984, extract from the monograph
'Samantha McEwen London/Paris/New York
Works and Life from the 1980s to the Present'
5 Continents Editions, published in April 2024.

Publication in April 2024 of the first monograph on the life and work of
Samantha McEwen from the 1980s to the present.

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5 Continents Editions



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