

ARTDEPENDENCE MAGAZINE

“An Interview with Liam Everett,” *Artdependence Magazine*, Dirk Vanduffel, March 19, 2017

March 2017, Cover Stories, Interviews

"My paintings are constructed forms that shift between light and dark..." - an interview with Liam Everett

By Dirk Vanduffel Sun, Mar 19, 2017



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Sometimes, not often, you fall totally "in love" at first sight. Standing in front of Liam's work in Kamel Mennour Gallery, it happened all over me.

It had everything and nothing, the paintings were more realistic than any realist paintings I know and yet more abstract than the work of leading abstract artists. It was an intriguing experience. During my visit I had the privilege of speaking with Liam. I was struck by the passion and depth of his words, the clarity he used to explain something that feels almost unexplainable. I realised instantly: I need him in our magazine. I need to follow him.

I hope you will be as curious as me to follow the path of this great artist. Thanks Liam! "Tu autem vade".

DV: Liam, I would like to start by asking where your interest in painting comes from. I understand you were not educated in an art school.

LE: My interest in painting developed out of an early experience with the theatre. When I was a teenager, I landed a part in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*. It was during this time that I began drawing and building things, perhaps as a way to make sense of a play that, at the time, appeared completely abstract to me. A few years later I began painting. It appealed to me from the very beginning because of the immediacy and physicality involved. Many of the things I do today in the studio can be traced directly back to the methods of practice I learned in the theater.

DV: I want to avoid asking you about the most important moments in your career, those that have defined you up to this point. What I would really like to know is what, if any, were the most difficult moments in your career?

LE: The most challenging moments of my career came when I first moved to NYC. They are likely to be the same problems that most artists face at the beginning of their career: lack of financial stability, difficulty finding a proper studio, problems establishing a community in order to generate dialogue and critical support. Looking back, it seems that whenever I have been able to work through a challenging period with my practice, there is always another potential difficulty waiting around the corner. Over the years I've become more flexible with this, maybe even embracing the various forms of resistance as a method of growth.

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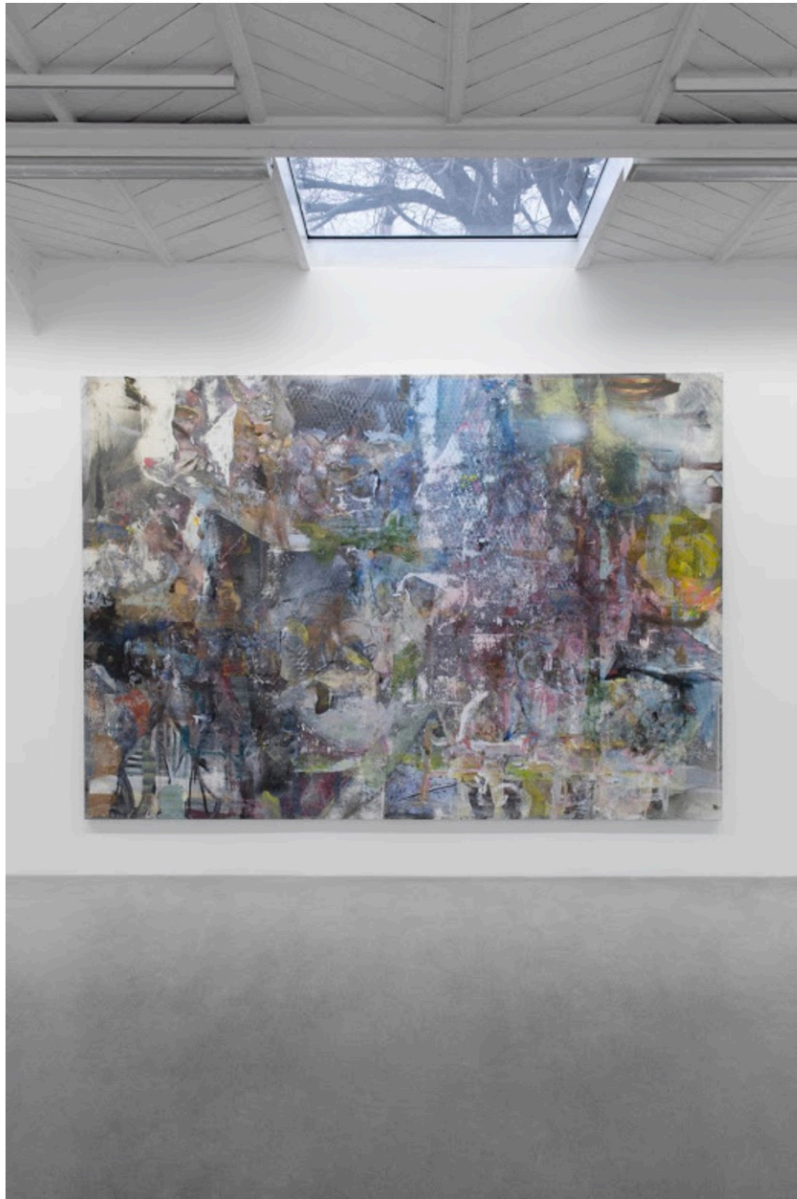
Liam Everett, Untitled (Eightercua), 2016. Huile, acrylique, sel, alcool sur vinyle enduit de gesso / Oil, acrylic, salt, alcohol on gessoed vinyl. 200,7 x 139,7 cm. Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition « panem et Circen », kamel mennour (47 rue Saint-André des arts), Paris, 2017. © Liam Everett. Photo. Julie Joubert & archives kamel mennour. Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London

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Liam Everett, *Untitled (Cloghanmore)*, 2016. Huile, acrylique, sel, alcool sur vinyle enduit de gesso / Oil, acrylic, salt, alcohol on gessoed vinyl. 198,1 x 284,5 cm. Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition « panem et Circen », kamel mennour (47 rue Saint-André des arts), Paris, 2017. © Liam Everett. Photo. Julie Joubert & archives kamel mennour. Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London

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DV: Looking at your impressive CV there are so many activities and exhibitions. How do you keep this organized?

LE: Over the past few years I've been extremely fortunate to be working with galleries that are supportive and conscious of prioritizing projects in such a way that the practice is protected above all else.

DV: Your work is being collected and shown by many museums around the world. Do you remember the first time a museum collected your work? And your first exhibition in a gallery? How did this change you? How did you feel?

LE: My first gallery show and museum acquisition brought an undeniable sense of affirmation, but what was most significant to me was that they provided the opportunity for the work to engage in a conversation with the work of other artists and viewers, thereby giving it a critical context. That couldn't have happened in the studio.

I recently had the pleasure of seeing one of my works (having been acquired by SFMoma) included in the exhibition "A slow succession with many interruptions", curated by Jenny Geith. The experience of seeing this earlier work within the context of the exhibition and the museum had an incredible effect on the way I view my present work, so much so that I have begun to change course and re-examine earlier questions that have now been abounded.

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DV: I looked extensively at your work at Kamel Mennour Gallery in Paris. It is a fantastic exhibition. I've thought about it a lot in the past few weeks. In a way, your work is abstract, it is absolutely not realistic but yet, I was able to see figures in it. Would you allow me to say your work is abstract realism, or impressionist realism?

LE: Abstract realism sounds relevant, although I don't really think of my paintings as images or visual documents. Instead, my experience is that the paintings are grounded entirely in the present and therefore completely derived from the immediate environment and/or original reality of the studio itself. They are constructed forms that shift between light and dark, hot and cold, fast and slow. Certainly there are figurative elements that appear and disappear, although this occurs more as a by-product of my actions and process.



Liam Everett, *Untitled (Actinolite)*, 2016. Huile, acrylique, sel, alcool sur vinyle monté sur panneau / Oil, acrylic, salt, alcohol on vinyl mounted on panel 40,6 x 30,5 cm (panneau / panel). 43,8 x 33,7 cm (encadré / framed). Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition « panem et Circen », kamel mennour (47 rue Saint-André des arts), Paris, 2017. © Liam Everett. Photo. Julie Joubert & archives kamel mennour. Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London

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Liam Everett, Untitled (Baotite), 2016. Huile, acrylique, sel, alcool sur vinyle monté sur panneau / Oil, acrylic, salt, alcohol on vinyl mounted on panel. 40,6 x 30,5 cm (panneau / panel) 43,8 x 33,7 cm (encadré / framed). Untitled (Tinzenite), 2016. Huile, acrylique, sel, alcool sur vinyle monté sur panneau / Oil, acrylic, salt, alcohol on vinyl mounted on panel. 43,8 x 33,7 cm (panneau / panel). 43,8 x 33,7 cm (encadré / framed). Untitled (Helvine), 2016. Huile, acrylique, sel, alcool sur vinyle monté sur panneau / Oil, acrylic, salt, alcohol on vinyl mounted on panel. 40,6 x 30,5 cm (panneau / panel). 43,8 x 33,7 cm (encadré / framed). Vue de l'exposition / View of the exhibition « panem et Circen », kamel mennour (47 rue Saint-André des arts), Paris, 2017. © Liam Everett. Photo. Julie Joubert & archives kamel mennour. Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London

DV: At Kamel Mennour Gallery you described your painting process to me. It was a pretty "complicated" or "different" approach. Can you explain it to me again?

LE: As a way of working without a true beginning or a proper idea, each painting is generated out of a series of initial layers in which I am simply place random objects that are native to the studio (buckets, sticks, string, wood scraps etc) on top of linen or whatever other substrate I am working with. After different arrangements, I spray ink and soak acrylic mediums around these objects, leaving the outlines and silhouette of their form. The result of these first layers is a kind of crude archive of all the objects present in my surroundings. Following this first phase I begin to apply paint, salt and raw clay in such a way that the marks are being guided by the first series of sprays and stains made from the studio objects. After several months of accumulation, during which each painting has upwards of 30-40 layers on the surface, the works reach a threshold. The linen itself begins to buckle and in some instances even collapses due to the accumulation of paint and debris. It is this 'threshold' that I'm always working towards. It is also at this point that I begin to subtract and remove, layer by layer, via sanding and various forms of abrasion, as well as sun bleaching, and salt/alcohol washes. This aspect of the practice is grounded in a desire to review or back track, to intimately re-discover how a painting becomes a painting and has the potential to remain a painting as opposed to a thing that has been painted.

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DV: How is working in New York different to working in Northern California?

LE: The single biggest difference for me has been the physical space. Once I began working in Northern California my sense of scale was radically altered and things opened up dramatically. This was partially due to the dynamic landscape of my immediate surroundings - the ocean, mountains and tree line. Before moving here I had been living in New York City and working in a tiny studio in the heart of Chinatown. Intellectually there are also several differences, although I have found that these are dwarfed by the environmental shift.

DV: What are your upcoming plans?

LE: I'm now working on new paintings for a solo show at Eleni Koroneou gallery in Athens. It's set to open in April. Additionally I am developing an installation for the SECA exhibition that will open in July at SFMoma.