

**Alex Kwartler: *Eclipse***

November 5–December 17, 2022

Opening Reception: Saturday, November 5, 6–8pm

Level One

*“When we saw the starry sky we were not bound to any form, and we could easily turn to the spontaneous creation of forms. Now we never see a point, but points. And these points create forms. The line appears plastically between two points; between several points, several lines... Think of the constellations: they too are forms.”*

—Piet Mondrian, “Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: An Essay in Dialogue Form,” *De Stijl*, 1919–1920.

Magenta Plains is delighted to announce *Eclipse*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Alex Kwartler. For this exhibition Kwartler has created a makeshift planetarium: large, multi-panel paintings of the constellations, dotted with smaller paintings of eclipses.

Kwartler’s paintings exhibit a material collapsing of the celestial and the everyday. Painted on plywood panels like the ubiquitous construction site barrier evident on so many New York streets, this starry sky is dotted with pennies, Powerball, tin cans, Tums and telephone receivers. These lost objects of quarantined couch life are objects manqué for the deep potential locked in the night sky. As anachronistic objects of pure utility, they take on an iconographic quality due to their presumed obsolescence. While the objects appear haphazardly scattered on a loosely painted ground, they are exactly rendered constellations plotted according to their location in the sky. The plywood panels, painted with Venetian plaster, are what Kwartler refers to as ‘a polished turd’ a reference to the high/low contrast of luxury faux finishing set against a common sheet of construction plywood. Kwartler’s work explores a tension between a precise, labor-intensive process and its appearance as random, loose and chaotic.

An eclipse requires three bodies: the thing seen, the thing obscured, and the viewer. Floating at eye level are Kwartler’s eclipse paintings on linen, which seem to have passed through the plywood panels, leaving behind diamond-shaped gaps. Riffing on Mondrian’s diamond paintings and their modulation of space through advancing and receding planes, the eclipse paintings set the exhibition in motion. This movement locates the viewer within the rotating dome of the night sky where lines can be drawn between the eclipse paintings, plywood starscapes, and the viewer.

The stars have historically offered us ways to structure and make sense of the chaos of lived experience, to connect to the ‘grand design’ of the universe. Points in the sky invite us to draw lines—to connect the dots—to create form and assign meaning. Painting, like pulling form out of the night sky, is subject formation. Looking beyond the perpetual analysis of our present moment, the stars offer us the opportunity to connect to constancy. Some offer hope, other arrangements portend doom.

Alex Kwartler (b. 1979, New York, NY) received his MFA from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ and his BFA from The Cooper Union, New York, NY. Kwartler has mounted two solo exhibitions at Magenta Plains. He has exhibited his work at The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI; 47 Canal, New York, NY; Ceysson & Bénétière, New York, NY; Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York, NY; MoMA PS 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, NY; Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ; White Columns, New York, NY; Bortolami Gallery, New York, NY; Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York, NY; Martos Gallery, New York, NY; Casey Kaplan, New York, NY; Petzel Gallery, New York, NY; and Wallspace, New York, NY. His exhibitions have been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Frieze*, *Artforum* and *Art in America*. Kwartler's paintings were featured in *Painting Abstraction* edited by Bob Nickas and published by Phaidon Press. Kwartler was artist-in-residence at The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX in Spring 2017. The artist lives and works in New York, NY.