

MEGAN MULROONEY

Jonathan Ryan

Hour of the Pearl

September 12 – October 24, 2026

Early morning is a time of magic in Cannery Row. In the gray time after the light has come and before the sun has risen, the Row seems to hang suspended out of time in a silvery light. [...] It is the hour of the pearl—the interval between day and night when time stops and examines itself.”

John Steinbeck, *Cannery Row*

Megan Mulrooney is pleased to present *The Hour of the Pearl*, Los Angeles-based artist Jonathan Ryan's first solo exhibition at the gallery. A suite of new paintings spanning intimate to large scales will be on view from September 12 – October 24, 2026.

In the title painting, *Hour of the Pearl*, two rows of trees create an eye-shaped gap of sky, where a glowing moon hangs in the darkening light. Below, between the trunks, a pale sun hovers on the horizon. Both are held in the same frame, neither fully arrived nor fully gone. This is the register the exhibition returns to again and again. Named for the passage in Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* – “the interval between day and night when time stops and examines itself” – the show gathers paintings suspended between two states: day and night, motion and stillness, unease and calm.

Ryan builds his paintings up in oil paint mixed with sand and decomposed granite, so the surface itself has grain and weight to it, closer to a mineral deposit than a painted plane. It's this same material logic that lets a row of trees read almost as a colonnade of stone in the title painting; the paint doesn't distinguish between organic and geologic matter, so the two can become deceptively interchangeable.

Working from a recurring vocabulary of monumental, uninhabited forms – cone-shaped peaks, sheer canyon walls – Ryan returns to the same compositions, reworking them under different light and atmosphere in the spirit of Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series. His studio is stacked with art books, and he draws as well on memories of geologic and architectural formations from places he's traveled to. These disparate references churn together in Ryan's studio and imagination, providing building blocks upon which his singular vision is built.

No figure appears in Ryan's landscapes, but the sun and moon perform a figure's role: they cast the long shadows that make the terrain feel occupied, watched, or waiting for something to happen. That psychological charge recalls the mood of de Chirico's metaphysical piazzas, paired with a different sensibility drawn from Ken Price – his eye for Southern California's own strange topography, its deserts and mountains, which Ryan remakes here into forms that feel geologic and invented at once. In *Citadel*, for instance, a field of cone-shaped peaks catches the last warmth of a setting sun, throwing stark shadows across the ground between them. In *Beacon*, a single, zigzagging cliff face climbs into a night sky scattered with stars, a full moon overhead. Underneath it all is a tonalist palette inherited from Whistler, muted and closely keyed.

Throughout, Ryan holds abstraction and representation together at once. His landscapes are recognizable as rooted in the natural world, but the color, material, and form are handled with the same rigor as pure abstraction. Gorgeous and slightly foreboding, these landscapes pause in the hour when time stops to examine itself.



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Jonathan Ryan (b. 1989, Buffalo, NY; lives and works in Los Angeles) received his BFA from Louisiana State University and MFA from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University. Ryan has exhibited across the US and Europe, including solo shows at the Landing (Los Angeles, CA) and Hesse Flatow (New York, NY). He has also been in group exhibitions at Monti8 (Latina, Italy), Andrea Festa Fine Art (Rome, Italy), Gerhard Hofland (Amsterdam), Hesse Flatow East (Amagansett, NY), la BEAST gallery (Los Angeles, CA), Ekru Project (Kansas City, MO), Good Mother (Los Angeles, CA), Tiger Strikes Asteroid (Los Angeles, CA), The Brand Library (Glendale, CA), Field Projects (New York, NY), and the Woodmere Art Museum (Philadelphia, PA). His work was recently on view at Altered States in the Acid West at the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art. Ryan has received fellowships and awards from Woodmere Museum of Art, Tyler School of Art, Vermont Studio Center, and LSU School of Art.

