

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

James
Cohan



48 WALKER ST | SEPT 6 - OCT 19, 2019

Josiah McElheny

Observations at Night

OPENING RECEPTION: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 6-8 PM

Moon Mirror, 2019 (detail)
Pressed colored prismatic glass,
stainless steel, hardware
103 x 191 1/2 x 71 in.
261.6 x 486.4 x 180.3 cm

James Cohan is pleased to present *Observations at Night*, an exhibition of new work by Josiah McElheny, on view from September 6 through October 19 at 48 Walker Street. This is the artist's debut solo exhibition with James Cohan and will inaugurate the gallery's new Tribeca flagship location. For this show, McElheny has created an environment of sculptures and paintings that explore the poetics—and political hope—of the night hours. The exhibition's centerpiece, a large-scale sound-responsive sculpture entitled *Moon Mirror*, will serve as a site for a live performance series curated by Blank Forms taking place throughout the show's duration. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Friday, September 6 from 6-8 PM.

Observations at Night focuses on the optics and acoustics of nighttime. Using refraction, reflection, and lensing to manipulate perception, McElheny investigates the nature of looking and listening through and beyond darkness. Tapping into the motifs of night, its celestial bodies, and infrastructure built for

astronomical observation, the artist engages with historical precedent to suggest alternate pathways for navigating the strange, surreal present. Central to the exhibition are visually dynamic hand-blown glass works inspired by what we see in the dark that we can't see in the light: variations in the moon's subtle glow during its transitional phases, for example, or abstract clusters of galaxies barely visible from earth. Across this new body of work, the artist incorporates illusory material qualities with surrealistic color to explore the generative potential of night, proposing that even in the darkest hours we might find new ways of seeing—that "we might today pass through a dream state into a cosmic future."

In ways large and small, all of the works in *Observations at Night* are inspired by the artist's enduring interest in sound, music, and listening. McElheny's large-scale sculpture *Moon Mirror*, composed of custom-made prismatic glass tiles arranged into a convex crescent form, will function as an acoustic reflector and open stage-like platform for performance activations. Blank Forms has curated a program of international multidisciplinary artists—including Sun Ra Arkestra, Fred Moten, and Louise Landes Levi—who will use this parabolic structure as a catalyst for exploring sonic feedback and social interaction. Inspired by Sun Ra Arkestra singer June Tyson's pursuit of cosmic world-building, the program interrogates how music and poetry might illuminate new pathways of resistance to our troubled political climate. The exhibition will include two performances each week, at 6:30 PM on Wednesdays and 2:00 PM on Saturdays, ranging from poetry to music drawing from black American free jazz and non-Western traditions as well as experimental music and deep listening.

Performance Series Presented by Blank Forms:

Saturdays at 2:00 PM

9/7: Jessika Kenney
9/14: The Sun Ra Arkestra
9/21: Louise Landes Levi
9/28: Nicole Mitchell
10/5: Fred Moten
10/12: Joe McPhee

Wednesdays at 6:30 PM

9/11: Hamid Al-Saadi with Amir ElSaffar
9/18: Susan Alcorn
9/25: Makoto Kawashima
10/2: Akira Sakata with Darin Gray
10/9: Okkyung Lee

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