

# Stephen Friedman Gallery

**Sky Glabush:**  
***The letters of this alphabet were trees***

Thursday, September 5 -  
Thursday, October 17, 2024

Opening:  
Friday, September 6, 6–8pm

Gallery hours:  
Tuesday–Friday 10am–6pm  
Saturday 12–6pm



Stephen Friedman Gallery presents *The letters of this alphabet were trees*, an exhibition of new paintings by Canadian artist **Sky Glabush**, marking his New York debut. Based in the countryside near London, Ontario, Glabush is celebrated for his brilliantly colored landscapes depicting forests, fields, flowers, sea and sky. In these familiar yet stylized scenes, the exploration of color, light and form is mediated through the use of texture, resulting from mixing sand and oil paint.

The exhibition's title is borrowed from Seamus Heaney's poem *Alphabets*, in which a young child leaves the classroom and discovers that tree branches form words and phrases. Mirroring Heaney's depiction of 'each strange letter' shaping one's view of the world, Glabush's images serve as forms and leitmotifs rather than literal representations; they carry historical and emotional content that tap into our collective consciousness, triggering new meanings and responses along the way.

In *Early Light at Roblin Lake* (2024), the artist's largest painting to date, Glabush suffuses the monumental composition with red and ochre trees that simultaneously obscure and reveal an expansive seascape resplendent with radiating beams of sunlight. Here—and throughout the exhibition—the artist uses the landscape as a place to explore the expressive possibilities of familiar forms rendered unfamiliar. The scale and composition of *Early Light at Roblin Lake* (2024) is reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's breakthrough *Mural* (1943), and the verticality of trees echo the straight lines in Barnett Newman's "zips" in *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* (1950–51). Other paintings in the show bring to mind Monet's late paintings of water lilies and Van Gogh's swirling, ecstatic fields of sunflowers and night skies. As the artist reflected in a recent interview, "I live and breathe modernist history, especially the moment leading up to abstraction, when the image was being destroyed, distilled, invented, and transformed, but was still an image."

Over the last decade, Glabush has developed physically rigorous and experimental techniques to expand the limits of painting. The artist's methodical, innovative process of mixing sand and oil paint enhances the play of light and materiality in the paintings; the texture transforms two-dimensional painting into a form of relief sculpture that pays homage to modernist strategies, craft and experimentation. For Glabush, expanding the boundaries of contemporary painting involves exploring the shift between these two genres. In this context, the materials themselves become key conceptual elements, embodying ideas of chance and transformation.

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## Contact Us

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## Notes to editors

### Sky Glabush

Sky Glabush lives and works in London, Ontario and is an Associate Professor of Visual Art at the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. Born in Alert Bay, British Columbia in 1970, Glabush received his BFA from the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and his MA from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

In spring 2023, Glabush's solo exhibition, *The Arrangement of Stars*, opened at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, England. The artist has had solo exhibitions at Philip Martin Gallery, Los Angeles, California; Clint Roenisch, Toronto, Ontario; Projet Pangée, Montreal, Québec and Prosjektrom Normanns, Stavanger, Norway. In 2020 his work was exhibited at National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

### Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery is a contemporary art gallery that was founded in 1995 with a focus on representing exceptional artists from around the world. Since its inauguration, the gallery has been based in Mayfair, London. In October 2023, the gallery expanded and relocated to Cork Street. In November 2023, the gallery opened its first location outside the UK at 54 Franklin Street in Tribeca, New York.