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Madison Cawein: Portals to Invisible Worlds

Exhibition Dates: March 31st –
April 30th, 2017

Artist Reception: Fri, March 31st, 5 – 7 pm

Gallery Hours: Mon – Fri, 10-6
Sat, 10-5

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Strange Attractor, 2017, oil on linen, 60" x 96"



Orchid Diadem, 2017, oil on linen, 60" x 96"

Santa Fe, NM – LewAllen Galleries is pleased to announce *Portals to the Invisible*, an upcoming exhibition of recent work by Santa Fe painter **Madison Cawein**. This exhibit showcases Cawein's recent paintings of orchids, peonies and gardenias: meditations on space, light, and perspective that intentionally blur the boundaries between still life and landscape, realism and abstraction.

With carefully arranged planes of soft focus and sharp, meticulous detail, these elegant canvases of mingling floral blossoms, light and glass create

a sense of quiet transcendence. The natural world is Cawein's subject, but also apparent is the artist's interest in the effects of perspective on perception – his 'scenes' are witnessed through air, through glass, or as through the lens of a camera. Many are composed as though the viewer were inhabiting a liminal space within the flower, the picture plane a passageway rather than a flat surface. These masterfully rendered paintings of reflected light and color are far more than just paintings of flowers. They attain a dream-like power from their often-large scale (as Cawein says, "They are experienced in relation to the body") and their arresting close-up perspective.

"Unlike photorealism," Cawein says, "these paintings embrace the touch and gesture of the brush." They are not self-conscious of their realism; they are assured in their painterliness, and

in the movements of its artist to interpret light and space in a way that conveys atmosphere and mood, the pulling out the unexpected out from within the familiar. For example, the artist doesn't render his subject matter as viewed from an outer, separate space. "These paintings are intended to be more intimate than traditional still life painting," Cawein says, "as if the viewer were living inside the space."



Moving Towards the Light, 2017, oil on linen, 17 ¾" x 23 ½"

These recent oil paintings feature a realism that has been transformed: light and form cast outward in spears of color or shards of radiant stained glass, mid-explosion. About the recent work, Cawein says, "I am moving further and deeper in the direction I have been traveling." The subject matter is still flowers, glass, water, and sky with concomitant reflections and refractions. But in this recent work – inspired by the physical limitations, accidents and surprises of photography – Cawein works increasingly with focus, or a sense of the interplay between long and short exposure times. "Soft focus can have a feeling of mystery, or of melting emotion." While many of these alluring paintings are kaleidoscopic and filled with such heavenly reflections of elegant color, this body of work is grounded in a desire to make tangible what is hard to see, but hidden within all things. "I have the strong sense that all these images already exist in the 'Invisible World,'" Cawein says. "My part is to create a dynamic solution to enable them to come through into this world."

Madison Cawein was born in Lexington, Kentucky in 1950. He concentrated in Art History at Harvard with independent instruction in Chinese Calligraphy. From there he moved on to a degree in Painting at California Institute of the Arts. As the first Bernheim Fellow who was not primarily a photographer, he spent 1992 in residence at the Bernheim Arboretum following the seasons. He has been the recipient of several other grants over the years, including a Kentucky Arts Council Professional Assistance Award in 1994, and NEA/Kentucky Arts Council Artists-in-Education Grants in 1975-76 and 1980-82. His work is represented in many public and private collections.



The First Peony, 2017, oil on linen, 17 ¾" x 26"