



Manzanita's Maze / Zodiac Harpsichord (detail), 2019-2021. Carved wood, water-based paint, ink, graphite. 72 3/4 x 52 1/4 in. Photo: Guillaume Zicarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

Zach Harris **Zero Hour**

Opening reception Thursday, March 4, 12-8pm
March 4 - April 17, 2021

The following text is taken from a three part essay, written by curator Lauren Mackler. Below, you will read Part 1: Time Please read the full essay [here](#).

A *zero hour*, at least in science fiction and religion, is a punctuating moment: one where not just the clock, but our paradigms, are reset. In the popular genre of disaster literature (and film), resetting the clock is a hallmark of world building.

Zero Hour here is a paced show of large paintings by Zach Harris, his third with Perrotin and his first with the gallery in New York. The paintings hang level, unevenly distributed across the walls of a former fabric wholesale building, like portals. From afar, their eclectic shapes catch the eye; they are eccentric windows. Made on panel, with occasional carvings and linen inserts, the pieces often play with light and depth perception. Each one is elaborately framed, though saying that would be separating the frame from the image, which is inaccurate; they are frames within frames, images within images, in infinite regress. Some of the works take the shape and scale of furniture—a large standing clock, a side table—but as you approach them, they convert into architecture and landscape: the clock becomes a tower teeming with figures, the image of a table becomes a mantel above which hangs a painting, itself a vista of a vibrant landscape. Where the frame ends and the painting begins is slippery terrain: each painting is essentially a universe in a marble. These stages of perception, the way in which the painting transforms as you approach, is the result of what Harris describes as “logic fields”: each painting is comprised of multiple planes, layered. The various planes provide stages of legibility as you approach the painting, beginning with a larger, mathematically drawn, architectural view that tumbles down into microworlds and narratives as you close the physical gap between you and the painting and invest time into slow looking. The paintings encompass a mélange of visual experiences—a mix of great painterly skill and conscious de-skilling—from perfectly unsettling perceptual illusions to quick, crude sketches and scribbling.



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A unifying principle of this particular show is the recurrence within each piece of clocks and levels. “A level is to space what a clock is to time,” Zach said to me while standing in his studio one day late last year, by which I understood the two to be tools by which we measure our adherence to a common ground. But time, or at least time perception, is arguably *not* common ground. And this body of work, while building on Harris's oeuvre to date, is arguably *about* time. It encompasses, most obviously, the visual representation of time—filmstrips in which images are stacked to create the semblance of continuous time and astrological calendar-like geometries—but also a measure of time, since duration is a fundamental part of Harris's process. It takes time to make these incredibly detailed pieces, some of which are worked on for years or incorporate older works; the pieces also resist time by never really being done (in fact, according to Harris, they have no “finishing moves”). Their creation process is infinite, much like the experience of looking into their pictorial planes. These are metaphysical pictures in a sense; they are “of the mind.” I've read them described (accurately, I think) as *mindscapes* more than landscapes. And they are a bit of a performance: Harris sometimes conflates the experience of the painter and the viewer; he imagines his viewer getting lost in the images, plunging into their various worlds and in turn imagining “the painter” in a trancelike state, channeling these images, characters, and universes.

In late 2016, Harris started making work about 2020, some of which is on view here. His understanding of the year's potency was prescient. Time in 2020 felt elastic, whirling by in some moments and plodding along in others. Experts crowded the airwaves to articulate the way in which our modern timekeeping had been shaped in service to industrialization and productivity (both dramatically challenged this pandemic-year) as well as emphasize that time perception relies on differentiation. The ability to chart change was stalled in the throes of stay-at-home orders and the cyclical rhythms of systematic oppression. In contrast to the functional history of timekeeping, time here, for Harris, is treated as a spiritual experience akin to Walter Benjamin's non-linear epiphanic time, and connected to vision, as both the capacity to see and the power to imagine.

More information about the artist >>>



Mushroom Cloud Vanity, 2021. Carved wood, water-based paint, ink. 56 x 43 7/8 in.
 Photo: Guillaume Ziccarelli. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

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