

*“As through a long-abandoned  
half-standing house only  
someone lost could find, which,  
with its paneless windows  
and sagging crossbeams, its  
hundred crevices in which a  
hundred creatures hoard and  
nest, seems both ghost of the  
life that happened there and  
living spirit of this wasted place,  
wind seeks and sings every  
wound in the wood that is open  
enough to receive it, shatter me  
God into my thousand sounds.*

Christian Wiman, “A Small  
Prayer in a Hard Wind”



BEERS London is thrilled to present My Thousand Sounds, the third solo exhibition at the gallery by esteemed Australian painter Adam Lee. The title, borrowed from Christian Wiman's 2008 poem, “A Small Prayer in a Hard Wind”, suggests the notion of a divine presence amidst human fragility.

In his newest paintings, Lee continues his ongoing fascination with painting as a form of private pilgrimage. For Lee, the process of painting can be perceived as a metonym for a type of spiritual voyage. His intention is that the viewer might perceive these paintings as personal votive objects linking the familiar terrains of memory, family, and loss, with that of a uncanny yet unseen sense of corporeal transcendence. In many ways the works function as relic-like objects that house much greater sublime ideas.

As he has explored in previous bodies of work, Lee touches upon themes of lamentation and grief, ideas of refuge and shelter, and the interconnectedness of family. But these paintings also wander through new modes of expression for the artist, namely how imagination can be a means to expand upon, and into, physical embodiments of yet-to-be-realized worlds. In many respects, Lee has become an emboldened fantasist, and these imagined scenarios are both more illustrious and more fantastical; the viewer is confronted by painting as altarpiece, mirror, or threshold between worlds or realities.



# ADAM LEE

## MY THOUSAND SOUNDS

PREVIEW: FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2019 (6-8PM)

EXHIBITION: 19 OCTOBER - 23 NOVEMBER 2019

The very title of the exhibition suggests this sort of phenomenological nature, housing a type of levity and effervescence. In place of concretion or fulfilment, these paintings offer magical suggestions, at times presented via the artist's playful layering of translucent and opaque colour. Further, Lee employs an eclectic group of images and symbols in these new paintings - vestments, a chrysalis, a family tree extending like an ever-expanding vine, a sort of 'will-o-the-wisp' type rapture.

In Cave Painting, a hermit-like figure sits before a giant easel figure painting, surrounded by a graveyard of canvases scattered around the mouth of a cave, the inner walls of which appear like an artist's palette or a map. And as viewers, we are reminded that this is a fantasy of Lee's creation - at the whim of our omniscient narrator. Similarly, we are reminded of literary journeys or pilgrimages: Paul's Auster's character, Julian Barber, in his 1989 novel Moon Palace; the lost and

seemingly forsaken painter stuck in his desert cave, who undergoes a liberation of all artistic restraints by making paintings no one will ever see. Or, perhaps, the mysterious painter's studio in Haruki Murakami's Killing Commendatore, a source of inspiration for Lee, wherein strange things happen: mysteries that hint at blurred or morphed realities. Lee aims to remind us that the artist's pursuit is both solitary and manifold, both drudgingly isolated but also exalted and applauded with an almost religious-like reverie. It is a pursuit of opposites, of fulfilment and of reclusion.

In this sense Lee's new paintings point toward an embodiment of the creative mind, both ever-expanding and consuming all at once. As with Auster and Murakami, these paintings seem to welcome the magic realism and the dream-like sense of (mis)understanding that arises through the narrator's (or in this case the painter's) eyes.

# A D A M L E E

**A**DAM LEE (b. 1979, Melbourne, Australia) lives and works in Macedon Ranges, Victoria, Australia. He obtained a PhD from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2015, and graduated with a Masters by Research and Bachelor of Fine Art from the same university in 2006 and 2002 respectively.

Solo exhibitions include: *'STRATUM'* with Jon Cattapan, STATION, Melbourne (2019), *'MONOLITH'*, Gertrude Glasshouse, Melbourne (2018), *'Lament Asunder (All is Dark is Midnight to Me)'*, STATION, Melbourne (2017), *'Of a Great and Might Shadow'*, Angell Gallery, Toronto (2016), *'Eden. Exile. Babel'*, STATION, Melbourne (2015), *'Into the Heart of the Sea and to the Roots of the Mountains'*, KALIMANRAWLINS, Melbourne (2012), *'The World Travailing'*, KALIMANRAWLINS, Melbourne (2011), *'And They Built for Themselves Kingdoms'*, Tristian Koenig, Melbourne (2011).

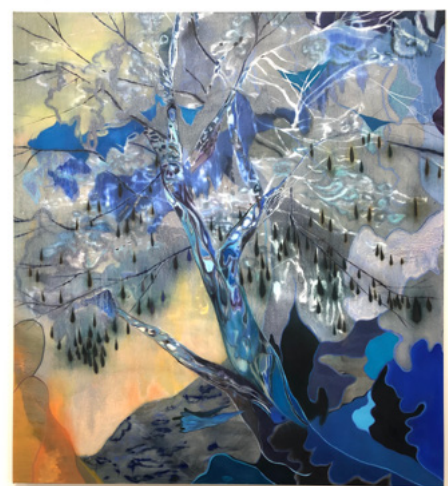
Group exhibitions include: *'Shanti Shanti Shanti'*, STATION, Melbourne (2018), *'Sirens (I Heard Voices In The Night)'*, Gertrude Glasshouse, Melbourne (2016), *'35 Works on Paper'*, BEERS, London, UK (2016), *'Angell Gallery's 20 Year Anniversary'*, Angell Gallery, Toronto, (2016), *'I Heart Painting 2'*, Angell Gallery, Toronto (2015), *'In the Dust of This Planet'* Station, Melbourne (2014), *'Ready Player One'*, STATION, Melbourne (2013) and *'Art Stage Singapore'* (with Karen Black), Tristan Koenig Gallery, Singapore (2012).

Lee has been shortlisted for numerous awards including the Geelong Contemporary Art Prize 2014, The Arthur Guy Memorial Painting Prize 2014, the Sulman Prize, the RBS Emerging Artist Award, the Rick Amor Drawing Prize, the Mornington Peninsular Drawing Prize, the Redlands Westpac Art Prize and The Churchie National Emerging Artist Award. In 2017 he was the inaugural recipient of the Glasshouse Stonehouse Residency in France. The first monograph of his work, *VOTIVE*, was published through Perimeter Books in 2018. Lee's first group showing with BEERS London was in *'The Fantasy of Representation'*, London (2015). His solo exhibitions at BEERS London include *'A Long Obedience'*, London (2015), and *'This Earthen Tent'*, London (2017). Adam will be having his third solo exhibition with BEERS London in October 2019.



**Family Tree** (2019)

Oil, synthetic polymer and pigment  
on canvas, 138 x 110 cm



**Votive Tree** (2019)

Oil, synthetic polymer and pigment  
on canvas, 165 x 150 cm