

# LUCY MAHON

## TO THE MOON & BACK

PREVIEW: THURSDAY 13 NOVEMBER (6-8PM)  
EXHIBITION: 14 NOVEMBER - 10 JANUARY 2025

*The paintings are about wondering, hoping, awe, tentativeness, curiosity, embarrassment, courage and vulnerability. Tales without beginnings and with no finite ending.*

There's a quiet nostalgia in the work of Lucy Mahon; a reverberance and reverie that seems to buzz and hum and thrum to life within and between paintings. This is Mahon's first solo show with Beers London.

I had been familiar with Mahon's work for some time before I saw a recent exhibition of her work at a small gallery and began feverishly texting the team at BEERS screenshots of her work, enthralled by her tender, story-book imagery and practically pointillist approach.

Nostalgia gets a bad rap, but ever since Homer (or the series of poets we have come to know as the singular author) began the rhapsodic telling of *the Odyssey*, this *nostos* ("return home") + *algia* ("lamentation") is a sentiment that - I think, particularly as we age - courses through our being. In many respects artists fling themselves to faraway lands - literally, figuratively - to see how and where return. For me, Mahon's work - both thematically and technically spoke to that aching desire for comforts of home. Paintings reminded me of my mother, my grandmother, my home in Canada, my travels, my childhood. The works had tapped into this subconscious yearning for a return to simpler times, simpler ideas. Mahon's are - at least superficially - simplistic takes on landscape, cityscape, skyscapes. Imbued with the same childish wonder whereby one recalls a time when our immediate neighbourhood forms the entire cosmology of personal experience; or how grandiose things seem magical, inexplicable, how the galaxy hums with mystery and suns, moons, and stars seem infinite and infinitely wonderful. When the chirp of a cricket is the most magical sound on Earth, and a scraped knee is the biggest concern in the world.

A graduate of History of Art and English, Mahon recalls growing up "in a busy household with a single mum," and themes of safety, home, and the comfort of ritual are evidenced in her work. These themes would be "domestic" but contemporary connotations equate domesticity to femininity, and there's nothing inherently gender-political about Mahon's scenes. They're dreamlike, sure, but they aren't traditionally about "the home" and gendered space as much as they allude to the fantastical. This instinct to "look closer," is tantamount to Mahon's practice. She credits "snapshots, spoken fragments, shifts in memory" and inspiring travels through unfamiliar settings as part of her ongoing artistic dialogue. This show in particular was inspired by her recent travels through Japan: "I'm looking to follow that journey once again. The paintings are heavily infused with imagery from my Japan sketchbooks... the rhythms of travel, or a story book."



In *Chatter*, psychiatrist Ethan Kross states that for many of us, artists included, there's a desire to "zoom-in" and focus intensely on the considered space; but the flipside of that is the need to "zoom-out," and perhaps Mahon's newest works feature constellations upside-down or front-to-back, the moon might find its curvature at a different corner of the orb, but there's a familiarity, a "canniness" about the scene that remind us how, actually, we can feel very alone at home, whereas we can feel very much at *home* on the other side of the world.

For Mahon, the work similarly undulates between ideas of childhood and adulthood. Innocence and (not "loss of innocence," but rather) Experience. What's nice about this dichotomy is the implication that age doesn't diminish our sense of childlike wonder and that - possibly - it only presents us further opportunities for awe, mysticism, unfinished ideas, rough-hewn dreams, capital-P Possibilities. What I love most about Mahon's work is that it instils within me the same sort of feeling that occurs when we park our cynicism - for cynicism is *far* too conveniently mistaken for aesthetic rigour or erudition - and allow ourselves to return to wonder. Susan Sontag criticizes how, in recent decades, "many 'serious' works of art have a decidedly impersonal character." These paintings look inward and backward, to tradition, to storytelling, to Romantic idea(l)s of making and sharing.

For indicative reasons, the paintings remind me also of my mother, who, when speaking with her granddaughter, says "I love you to the moon and back" and both of them (my mother, my niece) look to the sky on any clear, moonlight night, and think of the other. That's not twee, that's not "unserious," that's a reminder why art is worth making and, perhaps even more importantly, why life is worth living.

Text written by Andrew Salgado (artist & writer).





UCY MAHON (b. 1989, Watford, UK) currently lives and works in London. Mahon completed her studies in Art History and English at Leeds University in 2010.

Solo exhibitions include: *Innocence and Experience*, Espacio Gallery, London (2024).

Group exhibitions include: *Maza Art x Studio Afuera*, Hackney Downs Gallery, London (2025); *Miradas*, Cohle Gallery, Menorca (2024) and; *When Venus met the moon*, Casa Lú, Mexico City (2023).

Creative Collaborations Include: Liberty London, Smythson, Soho House and Fortnum & Mason.

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