

MARTIN WEBB

STAY JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER

January 30 - March 21, 2025

Virtual Exhibition Opening

Thursday, January 30, 2025 | 10:00 AM



Lola Shepard is delighted to present ***STAY JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER***, a virtual solo exhibition featuring the expressive faux-naïf landscape paintings by **MARTIN WEBB**. The exhibition premieres online at the gallery's website on **Thursday, January 30, 2025, at 10:00 AM** and remains accessible through March 21, 2025.

STAY JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER showcases the evocative artwork of Martin Webb, a British-born, California-based artist whose body of work examines universal themes of home, belonging, and connection, as well as our transient place within the continuum of the natural world. These reflections take shape in his works, which combine simplified representations of objects, fauna, and people, depicted in linear perspective and often layered with abstractions that invoke metaphor and ambiguity.

The exhibition highlights Webb's recurring signature motifs of boats, solitary houses, and travelers, symbols of life's journeys and transitions. These subjects encapsulate his ongoing exploration of permanence and impermanence, inviting contemplation on the delicate balance between stability and change. Webb renders these universal themes through paintings that feel both deeply personal and timeless.

Born and educated in England, Webb's artistic practice is steeped in the legacy of mid-20th-century British modernism, particularly the St. Ives School of West Cornwall. The influence of artists such as Ben Nicholson, Alfred Wallis, and Christopher Wood is evident in his use of elemental forms, flat pictorial views, color-saturated palettes, and the examination of the relationship between shape and environment. Since relocating to America, Webb has drawn further inspiration from painters such as Milton Avery, Katherine Bradford, and David Park, whose works have enriched his engagement with color, form, and abstraction. Webb's artwork resonates with the modernist focus on the intrinsic qualities of his media, resulting in paintings that are both conceptually rigorous and visually engaging. Within the context of art history, his work straddles the line between contemporary faux-naïf, hard-edge painting, and Expressionism.

Working primarily on wood panels, Webb employs a distinctive technique of layering and sanding paint to create richly textured surfaces where color and semi-abstract forms take center stage. Describing his process as working "on the edge of control," Webb starts with a plan but embraces improvisation and unpredictability, allowing each piece to evolve organically. Using tools such as brushes, squeegees, and combs, he introduces depth and complexity to his compositions. While his works are clearly representational, they remain abstract in their emphasis on geometric shapes. The aerial views and frontal perspectives deliberately distort spatial perception, further blurring the boundaries between figuration and abstraction. Pieces such as ***Not for Nought*** and ***Procrastinato*** exemplify Webb's ability to balance these two modes, leaning more toward abstraction in these particular works.

Webb's use of color is central to the emotional resonance of his work. His palettes range from cherry reds and vermilion to Yale blue and steel gray, emphasizing the harmony between geometric forms and place. His focus on color relationships, rather than creating depth, aligns with modernist traditions, using color as the primary mode of expression. Hard-edged lines and hard-edge painting techniques emphasize sharp, delineated areas of color with exceptional clarity, which are then sanded down to reveal more delicate, translucent areas. The artist's body of work achieves cohesion through the careful juxtaposition of color planes, resulting in vibrancy and symmetry.

Recurring motifs in Webb's art serve as archetypes, inviting broader reflection on the human experience. Boats, for instance, suggest the promise of arrival and the inevitability of departure. Has the boat reached its destination? If so, with whom? Or is it waiting for us to leave? These themes are influenced by Webb's experiences living and traveling along various coasts, from the Pacific Northwest to West Africa.

Similarly, the houses and tents in Webb's paintings transcend their function as mere dwellings. Suspended in time and space, they appear devoid of visible inhabitants. This absence evokes a duality, portraying these structures as both places of refuge and sites of seclusion. They feel familiar yet isolated, standing in silent dialogue with the surrounding landscape. Stripped of details that might anchor them to a specific time or place, these buildings become universal symbols of human habitation, signifying the tension between change and rootedness.

Webb's fascination with the relationship between humans and animals is evident in several works that feature whales alongside human figures. Works such as *The Long Now* emphasize the timelessness of the natural world and humanity's place within it. The silhouetted human figure in his paintings, often solitary and seemingly searching, mirrors the artist's personal experiences of migration and his ongoing exploration of identity and belonging.

In works like *Sunday Morning Brings the Dawn In* and *Port Somewhere*, Webb reimagines boats as vessels or pots brimming with lush foliage, symbolizing growth and possibility. These vibrant paintings, characterized by bold colors and dynamic geometric forms, represent a conscious shift toward optimism in response to the challenges of the pandemic era. Webb's studio, situated next to an urban farm, became a space of renewal during this time, with the rhythms of planting and harvesting subtly shaping his creative process.

Webb's paintings often resonate with the memory of specific places and moments, some more fragmented than others, revealing their ineffable qualities. At the same time, they transcend the personal, inviting viewers to reflect on their own relationships with home, nature, and the passage of time.

Martin Webb was born and raised in Lancaster, England, and moved to California in 2000 as a Fulbright/British Council teaching exchange participant. He earned a BA in Visual Arts from the University of Lancaster and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education in Art and Design Technology from Bretton Hall College, University of Leeds. Webb has exhibited his work in numerous museums and university galleries, including The Crocker Art Museum (Sacramento, CA), Stanford University (Stanford, CA), and the Triton Museum of Art (Santa Clara, CA). His solo and group exhibitions include Sue Greenwood Fine Art (Laguna Beach, CA), Stremmel Gallery (Reno, NV), The Compound Gallery (Oakland, CA), Blue Line Arts (Roseville, CA), Berkeley Art Center (Berkeley, CA), Gallery Route One (Point Reyes, CA), Esteban Sabar Gallery (Oakland, CA), Tercera Gallery (Palo Alto, CA), Metro Gallery at City Hall (Reno, NV), Sanchez Art Center (Pacifica, CA), Vessel Gallery (Oakland, CA), Green Chalk Contemporary (Monterey, CA), and others. His public art commissions include large-scale murals and installations for institutions like the City of Santa Rosa, UCSF Hospital (San Francisco, CA), and the College of Alameda (Alameda, CA).

Webb's works are held in numerous collections, including The Crocker Art Museum (Sacramento, CA), the City of San Francisco, and the City of Palo Alto, among others. His honors include the In Cahoots Residency in 2024 and an Aninstantia Foundation Grantee in 2018. He was awarded a Fulbright/British Council teaching exchange in 1999-2000 and has been involved in the Northern California Public Art Academy (2010).

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