

BERNHEIM

DAVID FLAUGHER

In Dog Years I'm Dead

BERNHEIM, London

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There is something quietly insistent about David Flaughers refusal to let the flower be merely beautiful. In his second solo exhibition at Bernheim and first solo exhibition in London, the Detroit-based painter returns to the floral motif not as an occasion for lyricism but as a structural problem, a repeatable unit through which to measure the deterioration of clarity, the slow erosion of certainty in seeing. *In Dog Years I'm Dead* is an exhibition organized around recurrence, and what recurrence reveals: that nothing stays the same, even when everything looks identical.

The works are distributed across three registers of scale and spatial logic. In the first, floral arrangements crowd overfilled vases, compositions that teeter between plenitude and implosion, where the painted surface itself seems to be negotiating the tension between holding form and releasing it. In the second, flowers appear under the duress of weather: dark sky, heavy rain, light that has been filtered through cloud until it is barely light at all. In the third, perhaps the most abstract group; the floral forms are cut loose entirely from terrestrial logic. No horizon, no shadow, no ground. They float in what the artist describes as "atmospheric space," in pure painterly condition.

Flaughers has cited Helene Schjerfbeck and Albert York as presiding influences, and their presence is legible here, particularly in the refusal of rhetorical gesture, the commitment to a chromatic restraint that feels earned rather than decorative and in the obsession of repetition to the point of abstraction. But the paintings are also unmistakably products of Detroit, a city whose relationship to duration, weather, and latency shapes the work in ways that are ecological as much as biographical. The Great Lakes basin exerts its atmospheric logic on Flaughers palette: grays that are never quite grey, whites that hold entire climates in suspension, muted greens and yellows that read like light remembered rather than observed.

The conceptual pressure Flaughers applies to the still life tradition by removing its traditional weight transforms these paintings into something removed from their heritage. Without figures, without narrative props, without the symbolic freight that the vanitas genre spent centuries accumulating, the flower is left to operate as what the artist calls "a vehicle", a carrier for instability, for memory, for what he describes as "the emotional architecture of contemporary life." The phrase risks grandeur, but the paintings earn it through their systematic modesty. Each canvas is, as Flaughers puts it, "a variation of a system designed to archive this fragmenting with a clear and contemplative hand." The archive does not preserve; it registers change. The system does not resolve; it proliferates difference. This has been the most consistent theme in his oeuvre, from willow trees to tornadoes, the motif is only an excuse.

David Flaughers (b. 1986, Detroit, MI) lives and works in Detroit, USA. Influenced by nature and homes in which he has occupied, the artist conveys the fleeting essence of life on earth, intimate family histories and changing values. Joyful elements are frequently contrasted with more melancholic imagery, creating a contemporary vanitas scene that reflects on the opposing forces in our daily lives. In some of his recent still life paintings featuring fruit, nature or wildlife, the objects appear drained and colourless, as if their potential for beauty and life has faded. He has recently exhibited at LOMEX, New York (2025); Bernheim, Zurich, Switzerland (2025); James Cope Gallery, Dallas, TX, USA (2025). He trained at the College for Creative Studies, Detroit (BFA, 2008) and New York University (MFA, 2013).

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