

**marguo**

Press Release

# STEINGRÍMUR GAUTI CHOP WOOD, CARRY WATER

12 January - 17 February 2024  
Galerie Marguo, 4 rue des Minimes, 75003 Paris



Galerie Marguo is pleased to present *Chop Wood, Carry Water*, an exhibition of new paintings by Iceland-based artist Steingrímur Gauti. On view from 12 January to 17 February 2024, this marks the artist's second solo exhibition at the gallery.

There is a Zen proverb that states, 'Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water.' The meaning: all begins and ends with work. The sacred, or spiritually elevated, does not surpass the profane but is rather found within its crevices. Steingrímur Gauti's expansive abstractions, which oscillate through scales of agitation and serenity, manifest this philosophy. They become sites of the 'delicate dance between embracing the ego's constructive aspects and recognizing its potential pitfalls', and reflect the artist's ongoing negotiation with the paradoxical dialectic of freedom and rigorous discipline.

This exhibition gathers a selection of works - which read like one protracted gesture rather than a series of discrete pieces - made over the past year. Ranging in dimensions from the hand-held to life-sized, the collection is linked through a terrestrial palette of rust, crimson, taupe, moss, and steely grays, jolted by the occasional cobalt and sporadic flashes of white and black that seem to skid and crash along the paintings' surfaces. Evocative of the vegetal and mineral realms, the nursery of plants that populate Gauti's studio, as well as the stark and severe Icelandic landscape beyond it, these canvases ultimately only refer to themselves. As Gauti explains, 'there can be a long story behind what I do. But it doesn't matter.' These paintings are here to be felt. Gauti likens the encounter to the act of listening to music, resisting the notion that (abstract, non-representational) art must be understood, or that there is something to understand, in

order to be experienced. The act of mark-making, while physically fixed and bound in time, is also approached as something ephemeral and ever-evolving; an exercise in non-attachment and energetic flow.

Gauti's method of working materializes a karmic sense of cyclicity and interconnectedness, the belief that nothing comes from nothing. First, he stacks swaths of cotton and linen on the studio floor, steeping them in the dust, debris, and atmosphere of his working environment. Then, using acrylic and oil paints, as well as mark-making tools such as oil sticks, pastels, and chalk, he begins composing on the top-most layer of cloth, which seeps and stains those below. These haphazard marks and shadows provide a blueprint for the following canvas, generating a sense of serial interconnectedness that contradicts the art historical emphasis within abstract painting on the individual artist and unique object. Quite contrarily, through this method of painting, Gauti carves out a space for the salient hands of Chance and Time, generating collaborative paintings that, in some cases, appear like alchemically oxidized terrains of pigment. The dissonant backgrounds and foregrounds of these nebulous landscapes conjure the differing tempos and rhythms through which they've been forged. They invite us to meet them in the moment.

### About the artist

Working with oil, acrylic, and mixed-media, Steingrímur Gauti (b.1986, Iceland) paints dynamic, large-scale abstract compositions which serve as a register of the accumulation of innumerable moments that constitute the artist's daily studio practice. Inspired in turn by twentieth-century art history and more ancient philosophies of Zen Buddhism, Gauti's process reflects an ongoing meditation in motion in which he works continuously from canvas to canvas, with whatever pigments are available at hand, striving toward a state of uninhibited expression that is palpably lyrical yet devoid of formal preconceptions.

Steingrímur Gauti lives and works in Reykjavík, Iceland. In 2015 he earned a Bachelor of Arts from the Iceland University of Arts and has since exhibited widely in Iceland and abroad. His recent solo exhibitions include *Soft Approach* at Galerie Marguo (Paris, France, 2021); *Mutes* at Gallery Port (Reykjavík, Iceland, 2022). Select group exhibitions include Art Paris 2023 with Galerie Marguo (Paris, France, 2023); *Men and Manus* at Listval (Reykjavík, Iceland, 2023). His works are currently featured in collections found in Iceland, Europe, The US and Asia.

### Press Inquiries

Maud Cartron  
maud@marguo.com  
+33 7 66 14 91 25

#SteingrímurGauti  
#SteingrímurGautiParis  
#ChopWoodCarryWater  
@galeriemarguo  
marguo.com

### Copyright et Courtesy Credits

Photo: Mike Derez. © Steingrímur Gauti  
Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Marguo

Steingrímur Gauti  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil, acrylic, chalk on canvas  
280 x 200 cm (118 1/8 x 78 3/4 in)