

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

Leon Benn

Dead Leaves

June 16 — July 22, 2023

Opening Reception: Friday, June 16, 6 - 8 pm

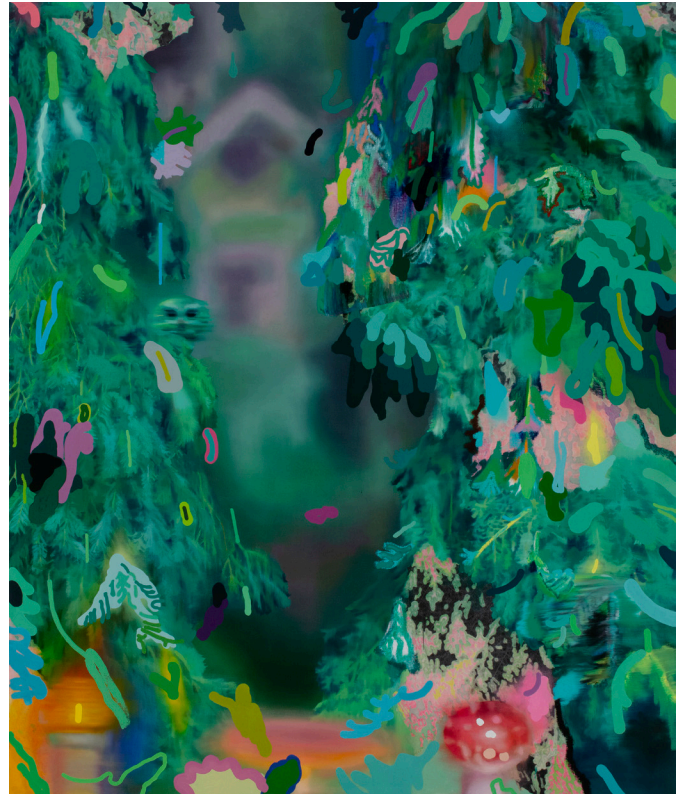
Free and open to the public | Artist in attendance

David B. Smith Gallery is proud to present *Dead Leaves*, a solo exhibition by Portland, ME - based artist Leon Benn. In his fourth solo presentation with the gallery, Benn's colorful linen canvases feature dreamlike imagery of plant life in mundane settings as observed on neighborhood walks in late summer.

Drenched in gentle sunbeams, the glow of what Benn calls "heavenly light" illuminates the subjects of each painting. Plants—flowers, vines, weeds, and pollinators alike—are thrust into the spotlight where they take on psychedelic, atmospheric qualities. With background and foreground starkly contrasted by use of blurring effects and the warm tones of the setting sun, Benn conveys a temporal dimension to his paintings.

Working outside of his multi-step process involving batik-style dying of the linen before painting, Benn's latest works invoke the modern world via effects common to digital photographic manipulation. Motion and gaussian blurs work their way into the compositions, forcing perspective while abstracting the figures, creatures, and buildings in the background. The result brings the viewer's attention directly to the foreground, allowing for shared pause.

With titles alluding to the poetry of French poet and screenwriter Jacques Prevert (1900-1977), much of the works in *Dead Leaves* speaks to the ebbs and flows that accompany the passage of time. Various measurements of time are captured in the works, from the motion of flickering moth's wings, to the inclusion of flora and fauna whose populations are in decline, to the golden hour that marks the end of each day. In his rumination on the natural cycles that govern nature and society alike, Leon Benn's *Dead Leaves* teem with life.



Leon Benn, *You See I Have Not Forgotten*, 2023, oil, oil stick, acrylic, and fabric dyes on linen, 63 x 52.5 in. (160 x 133.4 cm)

About Leon Benn

Leon Benn lives in Portland, Maine. He studied at the Rhode Island School of Design (BFA) and the University of California, Los Angeles (MFA). He has had solo exhibitions at David B. Smith Gallery, Denver; Grant Wahlquist Gallery, Portland, ME; Roberts & Tilton, Los Angeles; Stems Gallery, Brussels, and Carter & Citizen, Los Angeles. His work has been featured in group exhibitions at Able Baker Contemporary, Portland; Space Gallery, Portland; Brand New Gallery, Milan; the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; James Harris Gallery, Seattle; and Lisa Cooley, New York, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Portland, ME, amongst others.

About David B. Smith Gallery

David B. Smith Gallery is committed to presenting intelligent and culturally relevant exhibitions in its Denver location, featuring the region's most important emerging talent alongside internationally recognized artists. Through its curatorial program, participation in art fairs, and extensive media coverage in publications such as *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and *ARTnews*, David B. Smith Gallery has cultivated a strong regional, national and international collector audience. *The New York Times* hailed the gallery as offering "an exciting contrast of cutting edge works." The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions. David B. Smith Gallery is a member of the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA).