

# GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER

## PRESS RELEASE

John Dilg

Perpetual World

February 15 – March 30, 2025

Opening Reception on Saturday, February 15, 4 – 7 pm

Galerie Eva Presenhuber x P21

74 Hoenamu-Ro, Yongsan-Gu, Seoul, South Korea

Opening hours, Tuesday – Friday, 11 am – 6 pm, Saturday, 12 – 6 pm

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is pleased to present *Perpetual World*, its fourth solo exhibition of Iowa-based artist John Dilg in the dedicated showroom Galerie Eva Presenhuber x P21 in Seoul. It is Dilg's first solo exhibition in Korea. This marks the third collaboration between the gallerists Eva Presenhuber and Soo Choi.

John Dilg's paintings feel like landscapes rather than being such. Utilizing memory, he incorporates metaphors and abstractions, drawing from his experiences in his native American Midwest. Through the tonal nuances of color and the emotions they evoke, Dilg crafts a captivating symphonic composition that underscores stillness and the uninterrupted passage of time. The subjects of these works are not the objects that occupy the paintings but the representation of a moment in time in itself.

A river is flowing through a rugged terrain. The land is hilly and vegetation sparse, but not inhospitable. The water is clean but appears brown because the soil is peaty. The stream is fast and roaring, racing down the hill and over a waterfall that drops into a dark pool. Froth is forming on its surface. The greenery is northern. You can see ferns and some deciduous trees. The time is autumn. Frost hasn't set yet, but the anticipation of winter is already in the air. There is a large tree overlooking the river.

The nature in Dilg's paintings, and it is always nature, never cities, is wild but tranquil, not arable and clearly not cultivated, though occasionally scarred by felling of its trees. Usually the only movement is that of the water. Always nocturnal, windless. Stillness pervades, but it is far from being lifeless. Though animals and people only make rare appearances, the landscape feels charged. The stillness is not that of death, but of dream. Temporal respite from all the hassles and coarseness of life. Behind the seemingly frozen calmness, one can sense life teeming beneath every tree, in every crack of the cliff, and under the inscrutable water.

Despite the charged atmosphere, there is also unmistakable sense of resignation. But one cannot be sure if that is because Dilg is showing us the world recovering from a man-made catastrophe, or he is presenting an alternative state of the world that never experienced our destructiveness, the world that could have been but never was. Pieces such as *Looking Through*, where new signs of life are sprouting out of the stumps of felled trees, suggest the former, while works like *Nine-Mile Falls* may points to the pristine nature of the latter. There is discreet hopefulness for the resilience of wildlife in both scenarios, but we are almost completely absent from them.

Derive from Old English, the word wilderness means 'land inhabited only by wild animals'. There is a clear affinity between the states this word indicates and the landscape of the ambiguous world Dilg paints, where it could either be far away, far in the future, or it is a dream of the places we never ravaged. There is a peculiar sense of timelessness, which allows a viewer to reflect on the age when the nature was wild and unknowable, the time language and landscape knew no modernity, and speculate on the world that left modernity behind, at once. In *Wild Life*, even a jaguar has returned. They used to roam as far up north as Colorado. Or maybe they never left the world of these paintings.

Yuki Higashino

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John Dilg was born in 1945 in Evanston, IL, US, and received a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, US. Dilg was a professor in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Iowa, before retiring as Professor Emeritus in 2017. He is the recipient of a Fulbright Grant to India, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and three residencies at the YADDO Foundation, Saratoga Springs, NY, US. Dilg's work is represented in the public collections of institutions including the Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, AR, US; the Figge Museum of Art, Davenport, IA, US; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, IL, US; and Museu d'Art Contemporani Vicente Aguilera Cerni, Villafamés, ES.

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