

## Toward the Instant of Life, Death and Rebirth On Michael Eade: Past is Present is Future



Michael Eade, Pine Tree Sapling (Small), 2019.  
Egg tempera, raised 22k gold leaf, raised copper  
and aluminum leaf on wood panel, 17.1 x 13.8  
inches ©Michael Eade, courtesy Fou Gallery



Michael Eade: past is present is future installation  
view, photograph by Nadia Peichao Lin ©Michael  
Eade, courtesy Fou Gallery

To adore spirits in ordinariness; to pursue eternity from the minute. Living in reality, pursuing the ultimate ideality beyond reality has always been a lifelong goal of most artists in history. For example, in the Early Renaissance masterpieces *Primavera* and *The Birth of Venus*, Botticelli portrays the image of gods and goddesses in nature with meticulous and enchanting brushstrokes, embodying his imagined ideal beauty, making the works illusory, ethereal, and spiritual. The pursuit of this transcendental realm has been inherited and continues to be explored by many artists, and still enjoys widespread adoption in today's contemporary art.

Artist Michael Eade's longing for nature and contemplation on ideality is reflected in every detail of his work and life. Eade's art studio is filled with gadgets he has collected everywhere in his daily life. His collection includes multi-colored pebbles, dried rose petals, accessories people have lost at Sunday markets, and shiny crystal fragments. Eade has also built up a tiny shrine in the corner of his studio using collected elements — comprised of an abandoned Asian Buddha statue, glittering side ornaments, and a small vintage mirror in the back. Eade's philosophies have continuously impacted his art creations. His works depict the cycles of nature in nonexistent worlds uninfluenced by the passing of time. Life, death, and rebirth are his constant themes — alternately or concurrently.

Pine Tree Sapling is a new series Eade began in 2019. In the painted scenes, green saplings sprout from and around a burnt and destroyed trunk, inferring the dead body has become a breeding

ground, cultivating new life. The distance between old and young, and the cycle of life and death, are solidified with dramatic contrast at the moment of this alternation. The trunk as a symbol of death—and the sapling as birth—are comparably elaborate, implying the equivalent importance of life and death in the cycles of nature. If new life is the blossom of nature, dead life is the soil that nurtures this blossom. The Pine Tree Sapling and Nurse Log series return to the same idea of exploring life, death, rebirth, and the profound nature of this timeless power.

In August 2019, the Amazon rainforest burned continuously for many weeks, and many lives were lost. There is grave concern now that this catastrophe may trigger irreversible changes to the global climate. Perhaps on the doomsday appearance of the scorched land, the scene depicted in Pine Tree Sapling could be the ideal representation of nature's method for healing itself.



Michael Eade, Tree of Life Reflected, 2018. Egg tempera, raised 22k gold leaf, raised aluminum leaf, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches ©Michael Eade, courtesy Fou Gallery

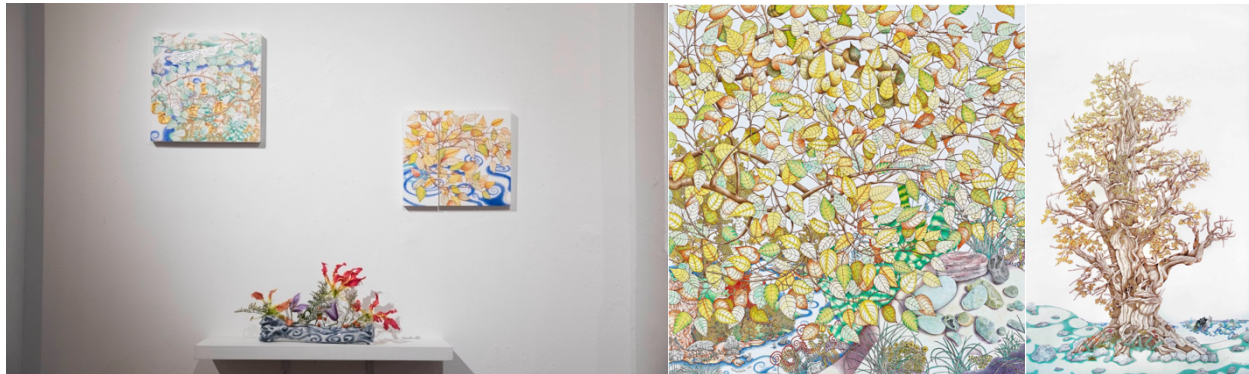
Michael Eade: past is present is future installation view, photograph by Nadia Peichao Lin ©Michael Eade, courtesy Fou Gallery

The image depicted in Methuselah, representing longevity, comes from a Bristlecone pine over 4,800 years old in the mountains of eastern California. It is one of the oldest living creatures on the earth. Having lived for thousands of years, the vigorous trunk still sprouts every year. Different from the traditional techniques of tempera painting, Eade intentionally utilizes the negative space of the gesso ground to transform the white into positive forms. This is a drawing technique — inspired by Oriental painting art — used to loosen the composition of a picture, and highlight the illusory atmosphere of an imaginary world. In 2014, Eade received the Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop Studio Immersion Project Fellowship. This was his second fellowship from the famous print shop. Subsequently, he has created copper plate etchings, relief woodblocks and lino-cut prints depicting sub-tropical plants and landscape forms; Sea Grape Branch (2014), a two-block linocut with subtly blended rolls on each block printed on handmade Japanese Misu Paper. His evolution into printmaking has significantly influenced his egg tempera paintings, and has gradually come to form his unique style today, depicting negative space in his tempera paintings.



The Tree of Life series, starting in 2010, is an earlier prototype of the Pine Tree Sapling and Nurse Log series. In the painting, a majestic tree stands solidly on a dreamy land that seems not to exist in the real world, and produces tons of glowing golden apples, some of which fall to the ground. In the Bible, the Tree of Life grows on the banks of a river in Eden, with its leaves and fruits helping to restore both physical and spiritual perfection. By choosing Tree of Life as the core image, by referencing the landscape painting of Peter Paul Rubens and Albrecht Durer, and by gilding the apples with 22 – 23 karat gold to create an extreme glowing sensation, Eade intends to depict a splendid and vibrant Utopia of Nature. This realm is full of seraphic lives, independent of the elapse of time. The entirety of the past, present, and future is frozen in this most perfect moment.

The Change of Season series also contains paradisiacal scenes, but the theme is more approachable. The splendid scenes, full of abundant detail, reflect Eade's visual interpretation of the constant change of autumn leaves. The leaves and branches shine in various colors, delicately intertwining green, gold, red, and brown, to complete their journey of life in this ecstatic picture.



Michael Eade: past is present is future installation view, photograph by Nadia Peichao Lin ©Michael Eade, courtesy Fou Gallery

Michael Eade, Change of Season, no.2, 2016, Egg tempera on canvas, 36 x 36 inches ©Michael Eade, courtesy Fou Gallery

Michael Eade, Methuselah, 2019, Egg tempera, raised 23k gold leaf, raised aluminum and copper leaf on canvas, 60 x 36 inches ©Michael Eade, courtesy Fou Gallery

In Eade's porcelain work Nurse Log series, the inspirational moments of transformation within the art-making process are solidified in the outcomes. The porcelain Nurse Log works seem reprised from the images seen in his tempera paintings, and each porcelain piece has unique colors, forms, and textures due to the uncertainty inherent to the shaping and firing process. In the exhibition at Fou Gallery, florist Yezi utilized Eade's Nurse Log works as flower containers, and implemented an Ikebana flower arrangement on the theme of Utopia of Nature. The style of "Ikebana" flower arrangement complements Eade's thoughts very well. The genre respects the natural characteristics of plants, intending to create serene forms with profound connotations. The floristic materials used in the arrangement are pure and simple, and the different states of leaves, flowers, and branches





represent the past, present, and future of life. This also perfectly corresponds within the theme of the exhibition: at every instant, past is present is future.

On the one hand, Eade's works reflect meticulous observations of the real nature; on the other hand, they also express his profound thinking around the imaginary nature. Another version of the exhibition, titled "Ksana"— meaning instant—is a Buddhist term. It is believed that each instant includes a full spectrum of emergence, living, transformation, and dying. In his works, Eade constantly depicts the cycle of life and death, and reproduces the past, present, and future of life. This is the natural cycle of life that happens in every instant of time in Buddhism. Every moment of daily life is composed of countless instants, and artistic creation is the keen perception, sublimed from chaos. To adore the spirit present even in ordinariness; to pursue eternity within each minute—if the spirit of art can be freed from the shackles of time and space, it must bear the hallmark of the ethereal realm of ideality.

<https://www.tusslemagazine.com/eade>