

## Anna Johnson

### Nuage et Vide

March 26—May 2, 2026

Kutlesa New York

Kutlesa is pleased to announce *Nuage et Vide*, an exhibition of paintings by Sydney-based artist Anna Johnson at the gallery's 537 West 23rd Street location in New York, marking the artist's first solo show with the gallery since she joined, and her first solo show in New York City, where she grew up in the early 1970s.

Positioned between post-impressionist sensibilities and lyrical colour field painting, Johnson's practice resists linear narratives of art history, proposing abstraction as a concentric condition that folds time, influence, and gesture into a single field. In *Nuage et Vide*, visual languages collapse: atmospheric lightness meets geological density, gesture merges with memory, and surface becomes both image and terrain. Working directly onto raw, unprimed linen without preparatory structures, Johnson pushes, disperses, and absorbs pigment by hand, creating compositions where edges bleed and reform to generate a tension between figure and ground, depth and flatness.

Shaped by the artist's personal geography between Australia and New York, the works carry the imprint of contrasting environments. "Conditions of light in Australia can be eviscerating," Johnson notes. "The palette of the trees is bleached, yet the sky is violently blue." Her childhood terrain was one of concrete, bitumen, and stained pressed metal—growing up in early seventies Manhattan on 21st Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenue, she "did not see the ocean for seven years." In that time, "the sky assumed the role of landscape, a liberating void above the grid." Her experience of New York exists in shards across three decades, and the extremes of contrast between cities and hemispheres had the power to bleach out the details. "Painting this show pushed into all the bruises of memory."

What began as a somewhat etheric theme—cloudscapes, zen minimalism, colour field aestheticism—gradually assumed a more confronting, almost gnarled presence. There is an idea that if you leave a city, the city will gradually leave you. But Johnson remains the sum of experiences both raw and sequestered, revealed in the restlessness of her palette and the bleeding edges of her forms. *Nuage et Vide* is an unexpected return to a city she retreated from but can never really abandon.

Recurring motifs suggestive of cartography, bark, and erosion surface and recede, yet the subject remains painting itself: examining how an image comes into being, occupies space, and dissolves. This invites the viewer into a perceptual ambiguity, questioning whether they are looking at something aerial or subterranean, expansive or intimate. The title *Nuage et Vide* (Cloud and Void) encapsulates this duality. As Johnson suggests, a cloud is both presence and absence—form and atmosphere simultaneously—existing as a visible structure while remaining inseparable from the space it inhabits. This paradox underpins the exhibition, where each painting operates as both an image and its own disappearance.

## **About the Artist**

Anna Johnson studied English, Australian literature and Fine Arts at the University of Sydney graduating with a bachelor of arts in 1987. The following year she was appointed Art Editor of Interior Design magazine. Since then, Johnson has been a professional art writer and author contributing to Vogue (UK and Aus), Vanity Fair, Conde Nast Traveller, The Sydney Morning Herald and as a senior arts writer for Artist Profile Magazine. She is the author of several monographs and has been a critic for both television and radio.

Holding many detailed artist interviews, provided an immersion in contemporary art three decades deeper than a conventional art school education. Raised in New York in the early 70s, time in her father's loft studio on the Bowery, as well as the artist enclaves at Max's Kansas City and Fanelli's Bar in Soho had a formative impact. Making the gallery rounds each Saturday as a small family, laid the foundations of a lexicon steeped in both Colour Field and Lyrical abstraction. Establishing her own full time studio practice in 2017, three solo shows in Sydney followed. Johnson's distinct griffe strikes a different chord to the dominant animism of Australian painting. Seven visits to Japan over the last decade, inspired her austere and symbolic use of space. The subtle rituals and expansive space within Heian screens, and calligraphy have been fused to a hyper-sensual use of colour.

Her consuming project ongoing are the 'Nymphaea Nymphaea' paintings, works that speak directly to the expansive and progressively minimal paintings of the late and post-Impressionists. As her works grow larger and more complex the scope of creating an entire environment without spatial periphery is approached.

## **Anna Johnson**

Nuage et Vide

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 26, 6–8pm

537 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011

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