Rachel Barlow

What's Lost in the Dance

October 23—December 18, 2026
Kutlesa Switzerland

Kutlesa is pleased to announce *What's Lost in the Dance*, an exhibition of new works by London-based artist Rachel Barlow at the gallery's Switzerland location, marking the artist's first solo show with the gallery since she joined its roster, and her first show in Switzerland.

What marks the passing of one moment to the next? A minute shift in the orientation of the planet. The falling of a leaf from the branch of a tree. The turn of a body, its movement in space.

For Barlow, painting is a way to explore the passing of time through material, physical existence. Her paintbrush moves across the canvas with the rhythm of a dance, cycling through beats, repetitions, and interruptions. Dance provides an important point of departure, as gesture and movement become intertwined into the act of making.

This physical vitality is accompanied by an awareness of the suffering of change. The painting process acts as a catharsis, conveying grief, joy, nostalgia, and memory through colour and composition. Rather than aiming to fixate a single moment onto the surface of the canvas, Barlow invites viewers to see her works as continuously changing, permanently suspended in the moment of becoming.

Trees form a recurring motif within this investigation. Rather than treating them as static representations of nature, Barlow considers their movement and relational structures: the way branches extend into, resist, and reshape the space around them. Taking inspiration from the philosophical enquiries of Deleuze and Guattari, the tree becomes both an expression of the individual and a model of interconnectedness. Its branches generate a rhizomatic structure across the canvas, challenging conventional hierarchies of composition and positing a non-linear approach to time and perception. Like the function of the grid, the rhizomatic tree structure forms a flat, secular surface on which to investigate feeling through the materiality of paint.

In *The ympe-tre* (2026), Barlow draws on her interest in literature and narrative form through the medieval romance *Sir Orfeo*. In this tale, a grafted tree, or *ympe-tre*, marks the threshold between the fae and human worlds. The painting explores the ympe-tre as a space of transition, between the real and unreal, and the possibility of a world unbounded by the ticking of the clock.

At the centre of this exhibition is a triptych of large-scale pieces that originated as a single multi-panel painting. Through the process of creation, these emerged into three real and distinct works that form an impossible repetition of Pleasure, Death, and Reality. Despite existing on separate philosophical planes, the physical intensity of their making and their formal compositional relationships remain visible.

The title that binds all of these pieces together, *What's Lost in the Dance*, acts partly as a question, and partly as a statement: in expressing what has been created through the process of dance, of gesture, of living, we summon with it everything that has been lost.

About the Artist

Rachel Barlow (b. 2001) is an artist from Cambridge, UK, currently living and working in London. Her practice uses landscape as a medium for remembrance, feeling, and belonging, taking inspiration from the geographies of southern Siberia where her family is from. Her current line of research is on the Yukaghir, a Siberian ethnic group, exploring their relationship to land and landscape.

To Rachel, painting is a method of dislocation in which real places affected by human destruction and natural disaster can be transformed into semi-fictional narratives. With a background in English literature, she sees abstraction as a kind of *language-making*, allowing her to intentionally communicate or miscommunicate specific logics in order to blur the boundaries between the real and the imagined.

Her approach aims to balance the spontaneous and intentional, allowing the painting to express itself organically. As the artist, she becomes an agent in the work's creation, and is transformed by its influence. The final piece therefore acts as an active material archive, a story of its own creation, changing in relation to the perception of each individual viewer.

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What's Lost in the Dance
Opening Reception: Friday, October 23, 6–9pm
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