

# INMAN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 13, 2023

Inman Gallery is pleased to present

## David McGee *The Tarot Cards and The Gloria Paintings*

September 16 – November 1, 2023

Opening Reception  
Saturday, September 16, 5:00—7:00pm

Artist in Conversation  
Saturday, October 7, 1:00pm

Inman Gallery is pleased to present **David McGee: *The Tarot Cards and The Gloria Paintings***, on view in both galleries September 16 – November 1, 2023. Please join us for an artist's reception on Saturday, September 16 from 5:00-7:00pm. An artist talk will take place on Saturday, October 7, 1:00pm with Katia Zavistovski, Curator at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Charlotte, NC, and organizer of McGee's first museum survey exhibition, which will open at the Bechtler in the fall of 2025. This is McGee's first exhibition at Inman Gallery.

Oscillating between abstraction and figuration, David McGee's work explores a variety of subjects encompassing the emotional weights of race, language, art history, and the recognition of existence, both individual and collective. Working serially, McGee returns to visual themes freely to explore ideas with continuous curiosity and interrogation, allowing meaning to cyclically build within and across each respective series.

On view are three distinct yet interconnected bodies of work: a large grouping of works on paper from the **Tarot Cards** series, multiple abstract works from his **Gloria Paintings** series, and four large figurative watercolors on paper that are born from the Tarot Cards.

The **Tarot Cards**, comprising approximately 160 small works on paper, are rooted in a rich visual juxtaposition of image and text, formally recalling the playing cards that give the series its name. The images pull from the art historical canon with varying degrees of popular recognition, from Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* to Cy Twombly's *Thermopylae, Gaeta*. McGee cleverly blurs the distinction between 'reading' and 'viewing' through his pairings, using language text evocative of US American history, with the Civil War as the focal point. Words such as "1861," "lincoln,"



David McGee, clockwise from top left: *Nature Girl* (2020), *reconstruction* (2018) *american psycho* (2019) *COTTON* (2019) graphite and watercolor, on paper, dims. variable, from The Tarot Card Series (2018–)

“ABOLITIONIST,” and “reconstruction” exist alongside more elusive, even humorous phrases: “Pokémon,” “sucker,” “MELANCHOLY liberal,” and “Ham and Eggs.” Collectively, the **Tarot Cards** tell a foggy and expansive story of the Civil War, highlighting its colonial inceptions prior to 1861, lasting historical and cultural legacies, and ongoing racial and economic reckonings still felt today.

Neighboring the Tarot Cards are four, large-scale watercolors of Black women, including one young girl. All four figures are dressed elaborately in high-society flair, ranging from 17<sup>th</sup> European century court attire to Southern antebellum ballgowns. Each are set against a stark, white background and surrounded by birds, fruits, and butterflies, symbols of messengers, temptations, and ancestral spirits. With no background to distract from the figure, the focus rests squarely on the women’s facial expression: her thinking becomes the subject matter, demanding sustained attention as she decides her next move. These watercolors emerged from one Tarot Card, *Nature Girl* (2020), which depicts a stoic, hatchet-wielding woman. “The story of the Tarot Cards is in these women,” writes McGee: these works are an homage to Black women and the strategies they have employed for their survival, both past and present.

On view in the south gallery are the **Gloria Paintings**. These abstract oil paintings, characterized by their vibrancy, thick impasto, and whimsy, are an ode to the artist’s mother, Gloria, who is in recovery from recent cancer treatment. Made as gifts to Gloria, the works signify what McGee calls “a continuous bouquet to her spirit and vigor.” The subjects include themes of nature (notably flowers and trees), modernist abstract painting, the Harlem Renaissance, jazz improvisation, and the playful act of “first thought, best thought.” In contrast to the **Tarot Cards**, these works offer a more personal and intimate glimpse into McGee’s practice. Tackling healing through emotion, humor, and aesthetic, the **Gloria Paintings** capture the feeling of release that comes from making it through to the other side.



David McGee, *Girl From Arkansas*, (2021)  
oil and collage on burlap, 24 x 18 7/8 in  
from *The Gloria Paintings* (2020–)

***The Tarot Cards and The Gloria Paintings*** exhibit both series in full for the first time, capturing the dynamic range of McGee’s artistic practice and his affinity for visual grandeur. In the artist’s own words: “It’s theater. It’s reality. It’s artificial, but it’s realistic.”

**David McGee** (b. Lockhart, LA, 1962) grew up in Detroit, MI and moved to Texas in the early 1980s. He holds a BFA from Prairie View A&M University. In addition to numerous solo exhibitions at regional institutions, his debut institutional survey and accompanying catalog, curated by Katia Zavistovski, will open Fall 2025 at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art (Charlotte, NC). His work is currently on view in the group exhibitions, *Art in Words*, at the Harry Ransom Center (Austin, TX) and *SANKOFA 23: The Sankofa Project Exhibition 2020-2023* at Lawndale Art Center (Houston, TX). McGee lives and works in Houston, TX.

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