

ANDREW RAFACZ

info@andrewrafacz.com
+ 312 404 9188

1749 West Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60622

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:

Jenal Dolson
+ 312 404 9188
jenal@andrewrafacz.com
www.andrewrafacz.com

Chicago, IL, July 19, 2024 – **ANDREW RAFACZ** is thrilled to announce *FTC*, a solo exhibition of paintings from Emma Welch, in Gallery Two. The exhibition opens Friday, July 19th and continues through Saturday, August 31, 2024. This is the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Emma Welch's hard-edged compositional paintings are created from meticulously applied wax pastel and colored pencil on linen, and reference unique visual phenomenon found in the natural world. Welch identifies her practice as 'field psychedelia,' where she engages in her own field research of plant, insect, and animal material, combined with further supplemental study and drawings, culminating in the dismantling of her source material to create new forms. The psychedelic element in her practice is born out of the patterns and compositions she creates, along with carefully researched colors, in an effort to create her optically challenging visual language.

The works produced for Welch's first solo exhibition in the U.S. are inspired by her current research on periodical cicadas, which have emerged en masse this summer in Chicago. Two broods of cicadas (Brood XIII and Brood XIX) are appearing at the same time, a rare event to witness. The last time they synchronized was in 1803, and it will not happen again for another 221 years.

FTC introduces two new series of paintings respectively titled *Patches* and *Piles*. The paintings that comprise *Patches* build on Welch's previous 'flower fence' series (2021 -), in which one pattern is overlaid on top of another. Figures repeat and are spaced tightly together, creating a chain-like fence pattern. Highly saturated colors offer an optical effect for the viewer, wherein negative and positive spaces appear to oscillate and compete for attention.

Welch interrupts the compositions in these paintings with small blue-black oblong oval shapes, placed like eyes in the smaller works and scattered like holes within the larger one. The very specific blue-black she uses approximates the color of the body of a cicada, while the forms reference the eye-like patches on the pronotum (the segment behind the eyes) of a newly surfaced cicada nymph. Welch utilizes a palette of deep red and orange in these works, referencing the cicada's bright red eyes and orange wings.

Piles, the corresponding series of works presented in the exhibition, employ a very different but related compositional strategy. While the 'flower fence' works feature overlaid patterns, these paintings create the optical illusion of overlapping patterns, where the forms instead border each other. The density of the compositions suggests the piles of scattered skins, like leaves on the ground, left behind when the cicada nymphs emerge, molt and shed their exoskeletons.

EMMA WELCH (Canadian, b. Ontario 1993) received her BAH in Studio Art from the University of Guelph (Guelph, ON, Canada). Recent solo and two person exhibitions include Hunt Gallery (Toronto, ON), Project Underwing (Toronto, ON) and Spacemaker II (Toronto, ON). Recent group exhibitions include ANDREW RAFACZ (Chicago, IL), Galerie Nicolas Robert (Montreal, QC), Erin Stump Projects (Toronto, ON), Egret Egress (Toronto, ON), Namara Projects (Toronto, ON), and Stewart Hall Art Gallery (Pointe-Claire, QC). She has exhibited at art fairs in Toronto, and recently completed the Annandale Artist Residency (Annandale, PEI). Her work has been written about in many publications, including Art Viewer, Cornelia Magazine and Femme Art Review. Her work is included in the public collections of Scotiabank, The Royal Bank of Canada, as well as numerous private collections.