

PAUL SOTO

Aidan Koch  
*Wing Whistles*  
April 2 – May 20, 2023  
Los Angeles

opening reception  
Sunday April 2  
3 to 5pm



Aidan Koch, *Days of Red Sun I*, 2023, gouache and pastel on paper, 26 x 22 inches (66.1 x 55.9 cm)

Paul Soto / Park View are proud to announce *Wing Whistles*, a solo exhibition with the Landers, California based artist Aidan Koch. This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery. *Wing Whistles* will open at the gallery with a public reception on Sunday, April 2 from 3 to 5pm,

and will run through the spring until Saturday, May 20. Koch's exhibition features a new suite of drawings, animation, and sculpture.

In *Wing Whistles*, Aidan Koch engages with the inherent tension between a hazily known past, a precarious present, and an uncertain future. The eponymous effect – generated by startled doves as an alarm system, and meant to telegraph the presence of danger to others – serves as the show's operating metaphor: in a moment of ecological collapse can we at once feel free and heed a warning?

Large chalk pastels depict burning or charred hills, birds spiraling out of smoky skies, and the skeletal remains of plants killed by heat and drought. Yet the signs are ambiguous: creeping flowers bloom in the ragged margins, a buttery moon and throbbing sun preside, and faint rivulets still course through denuded landscapes. The works reference 2020's Apple Fire in the San Bernardino Mountains just west of Koch's home, worsening fire seasons in the Sierra Nevada, and the climbing temperatures of the Coloradan-Sonoran desert, where Koch assists in ecological field work.

In ancient Rome the auguries predicted the future through observing the flight and feeding patterns of birds. Similarly, in drawings and sculptures, Koch looks to doves – rich symbols, and a species she raises at her home in the Mojave desert – as clumsy messengers, tumbling to earth and perpetually bungling their haphazard nests, which sit atop broken chairs and inverted brooms. Somehow, by dint of sheer persistence, they are abundant.

Elsewhere, in a series of graphite, gouache, pastel, and watercolor drawings, Koch further plays with the ambiguous relationship between past, present, and future through the imagery of a three card Tarot spread. Like decks in the Surrealist tradition, her arcana are idiosyncratic: human figures stand in for celestial phenomenon, endangered species sit beside electrical transformers, and the mythopoetic dwells in the mundane, both freighted with meaning and interpretively unstable.

As Gramsci famously noted of a different epoch's crisis, “the old is dying and the new cannot be born.” Koch's work suggests something similar. The scale and ubiquity of present catastrophes seems insurmountable. Yet there is a lively tension between hope and warning. An idyllic past can't return, but the worst may not manifest. Instead, as “Wing Whistles” seems to say, “what is not yet might still be.”

–Nicholas McElroy

Aidan Koch (born in 1988 in Olympia, Washington) lives and works in Landers, California. She received an MFA in 2022 from Emily Carr University in Vancouver, British Columbia, and a

BFA from Pacific NW College of Art, Portland, Oregon. Her works have been exhibited at Paul Soto, Los Angeles; Maison de Rendez-Vous, Brussels; 14a Gallery, Hamburg; Semiose Gallery, Paris; Naughton Gallery at Queens University, Belfast; Centro Colombo Americano, Bogota; South Bend Museum of Art, Indiana; and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, amongst other venues. Koch is the founder of the [Institute for Interspecies Art and Relations \(IFIAAR\)](#) and [Environmental Comics](#), which foreground environmental activism.

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