

# BROOKLYN RAIL

ARTSEEN NOVEMBER 2025

## Clare Grill: *Parlance*

By Patrick Hill



Installation view: *Clare Grill: Parlance*, Derek Eller Gallery, New York, 2025. Courtesy Derek Eller Gallery.

It's not every day we meet the cosmic in Tribeca. Clare Grill's *Parlance*—her third solo show with Derek Eller and her seventeenth overall—is a near-cinematic spiritual gathering of legitimate dream portals, unstable entrances to living scenes from Grill's vast internal and temporal world. Physical abstraction meets subconscious cataloging to produce an effect that is as spellbinding as it is constantly redefining itself, a surrender and ode to the solar cycles we call time.

Right up front, the flower-punk *Dune* (all works oil on linen; all works 2025) explodes with lavender dew-drops like happy tears collapsing at its edges, a new green world emerging under a semi-solar system. There's a kind of perpetual zoom out as the horizon shifts ever downward to the shock-yellow hive-home casting its shadow in the bottom left, as if the painting's bright morning moves forward only when you look away.



Clare Grill, *Dune*, 2025. Oil on linen, 94 × 73 inches. Courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery.

Interwoven with the sleepy *Nod* (to me a bittersweet beach scene) and the swamp-jazzy *Weld*, Grill's instinct is as much rooted in the active, compulsive nature of imagination as it is the temporal inevitability of dreaming—giving over oneself to an uncontrollable, at times profound sequence of images we didn't even know we were holding. In effect, it's a deeply emotive and secretly-plotted experience, like reading an old journal from end to end. It's easy to feel like you're wandering into the painter's space, maybe even intruding, but in actuality, time does indeed pass, and Grill does indeed want you here, so much so that by the time you realize she's been pulling you by the hand the whole time, night's already fallen.

The 80-by-112-inch diptych *Drape* is just unreal—one of those proto-holocene holy scenes you picture at the end of the Cretaceous Period, a view from ashy leaf cover as atmospheric embers and rain fall down to form what will be most precious soil. I don't know if it's the size, or the way the diptych line dividing that deathly violet with that specific mahogany practically vanishes the moment you look away, or the image itself (sharp red razor curls, a blue moon, cracks in the sky), but there's a grand existential drama that unfolds here, completely recontextualizing the room you have to walk back through. There's an utter mass to this picture that pictures won't do justice—you think hard about *creation*. As much blooming and conjuring as Grill does, she doesn't leave behind the fact that there's a time and life before and after us we can only imagine. It's in that question space that the spirit gathering *Flit* and *Lop*, both in the back and wisely presented just far enough from each other, play with the realm of myth, the potential but unproven, two scenes from an after or pre-life.



Clare Grill, *Drape*, 2025 Oil on linen, 80 × 112 inches (diptych). Courtesy the artist and Derek Eller Gallery.

It was stepping back and forth at *Drape* that I came to realize Clare Grill isn't in the abstraction business so much as the transportation business. These are views of a world with a language (at times gathered by Grill, like her monosyllabic titles, or allusive to her daughter's created "witch language," these paintings whisper at you), and someone I've never met appears to inhabit them, but at no point are they totally unfamiliar or so referential as to be uncanny. Clare spins a painterly yarn that lands somewhere between Hilma af Klint and the Safavids, but to be honest, not once did I think about history—the spooky action of *Parlance* is its ability to render all time outside the gallery irrelevant. If you give yourself up even a little to these paintings, they'll take you somewhere else entirely.