

Michael James McCormack

Black Forest Waterfall, 2024

The Swan, 2024

Château du Barry, Louveciennes, 2024

Michael James McCormack's (b.1996) paintings explore, often in a playful way, how we relate to ideas of posterity, how local stories are told and at times forgotten, and how historical value is accrued or lost.

For this new commission, McCormack has re-interpreted two landscape paintings by Museum founder Joséphine Bowes. Joséphine's original pieces depict a waterfall in Germany's Black Forest and a rural scene in Louveciennes, the Île-de-France region. McCormack's fanciful re-imagining of these landscapes is almost portrait-like, signalling how environments result from a historical dialogue between humans and nature.

McCormack's flags feature rapid, gestural strokes; as if they were painted on a canvas or a gallery's white walls. His work contrasts with the building's structured façade and invites us to see our outdoor spaces as an integral part of the Museum.

The central flag pays tribute to the Museum's iconic Silver Swan, one of the finest examples of eighteenth-century automata in the world, to celebrate its public display after months of careful conservation work. The swan's head, imposing and defiant, looks at us with renovated vigour and reminds us how traditional knowledge and skills (in this case, clock-making and horology) help us to preserve objects that are meaningful to a community.



Top
The Château du Barry at Louveciennes
1860-62, Joséphine Bowes (1825- 1874),
© The Bowes Museum

Bottom
Waterfall in the Black Forest c. 1860-74,
Joséphine Bowes (1825- 1874),
© The Bowes Museum