“I was the shadow of the waxwing slain, by the false azure in the window pane,” the character John Shade writes in Nabokov’s novel *Pale Fire*. It’s from Shade’s fictional poem recounting the crash of a bird into a window, that John McAllister finds the title of his current exhibition, *cymbals of sleep uncurtain the night*.

McAllister’s flat, neon-Fauvist landscapes beckon us to look through a figurative window pane. The artist also asks the viewer to step outside the window, by toying with the illusion of three-dimensionality in his eight-panelled, panoramic landscape. *cymbals of sleep uncurtain the night* is a slight tongue-in-cheek play at the panorama painting genre of the 19th & 20th centuries, as it does not attempt an illusion of a continuous environment. Instead, McAllister’s radiant landscape is removed from the walls and, standing in the middle of the space, is broken up into eight conjoined panels, thus actually encompassing the viewer. It’s hard not to feel a surge of emotion when looking at this monumental blue-and pink-sunset, as the artist also adds a dimension of temporality to the stagnant panoramas of the past.
McAllister’s game of perspectives corresponds to the prank-like style of Nabokov’s Pale Fire, a book that tricks the reader into thinking they’re reading a poem with academic commentary, only to realize they’ve read a fictional novel. McAllister’s fantastical paintings are on view at James Fuentes until April 15th. – Claire Milbrath