

# Miltos Manetas, *Floating Studio (The World We Live In)*

Directed by Jérôme Sans

Galerie Hussenot

Miltos Manetas is a Greek painter, artist and theorist whose work is known for being anchored in digital culture. Since the end of the 1990s, he has been questioning the behavioral and social shifts associated with the rise of the Internet. His approach, often collaborative reflects the fluidity of virtual and physical spaces and the construction of the Internet as a real place. A pioneer in this field, he initiated *NEEN ART* (2000), self-proclaimed “the first art movement of the 21st century” and the first *Internet Pavilion* at the Venice Biennale (2009) which challenge with a spirit of total openness our real presence in a computational and globalized world.

*Floating Studio (The World We Live In)* is a new chapter that he presents for the first time at the Galerie Hussenot in Paris. It is not an exhibition in the traditional sense, but a studio in permanent motion where the physical and digital domains collide: a simulation of a fictitious online space, through the physical gallery space. Miltos Manetas defies the usual conditions of production and exhibition by not exhibiting a set of finished works, but rather transforming the gallery into a living creative space: an ever-changing studio.

Voluntarily starting his project on Monday, November 22 to inaugurate a new work-week, the artist also rethinks the place of the public as an integral part of the exhibition envisioned as “a collective effort” in its own right. “*We will do it together, myself—the artist—the curator—the Galerie Hussenot—You, me: the Public.*” More than a static, monolithic exhibition, it is an event “to compose together”, to live and to experiment in order to build a genuine common space. A place that mirrors the social networks where so many new contents and relationships are being created. At a time when reality disappears more and more under the increase of new modes of sociability and circulation of the information generated by our screens, “*Our work and my exhibition consist in claiming our real space*”, he states. Fluctuating and inclusive, his *Floating Studio* takes the form of an open laboratory producing the exhibition in real time—a path to follow the artist’s presence inhabiting the exhibition and making it evolve. Every day the works come and go, change or disappear as on a news feed open to all new configurations.

The *Floating Studio* is designed as a real stage on which the ubiquity and velocity of digital technology become an experience to be lived. Miltos Manetas, who has made a name for himself painting the iconographic system of our time—laptops, cables, and all manner of technological devices—presents a set of canvases and wall paintings, *Pictures of Manetas Floating Studio*. Made from pigments and soap, they can be erased as fast as our online searches, transforming themselves into simulated screens. His analogical representations of the metaverse (a digital duplicate of the physical world, accessible via Internet) scroll across the walls, extending his illustrative project of this concept initiated in 1998 on *Active Worlds* and later transplanted on *Second Life*. Everything concurs here to put into play an analog simulation in real time of the digital activity of the computer, and by extension, of the digitalization of the world today. From then on, the changes that modify the works occur in front of the public in response to their questions and reactions. This interactive performance extends throughout the duration of the exhibition, like on a WhatsApp chat, constantly growing, while

the unlimited energies of NFTs, social networks, online forums, GAFAs and digital startups flow through this environment. This way, the artist summons our unanimous state of confusion towards the experience of reality, itself constructed and perceived through the prism of the GAFAs (Google, Alibaba, Netflix, Twitter Apple, Facebook, LinkedIn, ...). Thus, the project brings with full force the intrusive and immersive nature of the Internet, this inextricable network at the heart of our daily lives.

If the Internet has disrupted our perception of reality, suspended between digital consumerism and the overconsumption of objects, Miltos Manetas also reconnects the Internet to the ideal of a communitarian society from which it was originated: the hippie movements of the 1960s that just preceded its birth. In the same logic as the proliferation of the web, Miltos Manetas simulates all the digital tools at our disposal, as well as the free or connected spaces to be appropriated as real places. A true invitation to collectively experiment with the different stages of his *Floating Studio*, the exhibition provides a kaleidoscopic experience of the beginning of the metaverse, a virtual world that is fictional and yet very real.

Jérôme Sans, 2021