

Simo Bacar

Rafal Topolewski
If Not, Winter
April 8 – May 7, 2022

Simo Bacar is delighted to present *If Not, Winter*, its inaugural exhibition featuring works by Rafal Topolewski.

If Not, Winter presents Sappho's fragments rehabilitated by Anne Carson as she revises the archaic poetry in order to prod the limits of language and explore sentiments that endure. Philosophers, poets, and artists alike commune on the level of Being-in-the-World, responding to pressure points tracing nodes at which symbologies and cosmologies collapse. With Carson as a distinct point of reference, Topolewski concerns himself with paraphrased sources and intimate undertakings, ultimately asserting sovereign images on linen or canvas. Topolewski fixates on his own objectives, responds to woes, and produces a visual language borne from the emancipation of interiority. He is engaged in a balancing act, not too this or too that, excavating his singular equilibrium: Topolewski's ideal.

The "Deep Breath" paintings are soaked in crimson and emerge from Topolewski's recurring dream in which he is deprived of oxygen. An experience repeats and memories persist, panic transforms into resolve. Topolewski is frightened upon stirring, but settles back into a halcyon state ripe for his return to sleep. The recurring dream haunts its dreamer like an unscratchable itch; temporary catharsis with an ultimate return to perturbation. These paintings reflect his attempt to approximate that point at which dreams glide into waking life, and in turn, confront the boundary between life and death.

Topolewski's application of paint is not heavy handed – he administers his materials with a softness akin to velvet. The compositions are laden with poetry, prescription exchanged for puissance. When composing images he drifts away from the source in pursuit of an essence. His paintings are elegiac and intimate at once. Having boomeranged from figuration to abstraction and then back again, his work duly picked up new understandings of the way objects and bodies work formally, how they operate within space, and thus their potential for containment within the picture plane.

Topolewski duly sustains a remarkable consideration of context and the burden of history. With Anne Carson as a guiding spirit, the painter explores the creative potential in repetition, hypnagogia, and desire. This exhibition lays bare transience and ambivalences, intimacy and estrangement.

– Reilly Davidson

Rafal Topolewski (b. 1983 Grudziadz) lives and works in Lisbon. The artist studied Fine Art at the Royal Academy of Arts and at the Manchester Metropolitan University and Architecture at Wroclaw University of Technology. Recent exhibitions include: *Isle*, Lewis Hammond and Rafal Topolewski at Smart Objects, Los Angeles (2018); *Terraforms* at The Concept Space, London (2018); *Adolf Menzel's Foot* at PS Mirabel, Manchester (2017); *Fully Awake* at Blip Blip Blip, Leeds (2017); Royal Academy Show at the Royal Academy Schools, London (2016); *Premiums* at the Royal Academy of Arts, London (2015).