

CASTLE presents 'City of Women' an exhibition of new paintings by Max Xeno Karnig.

In City of Women, Karnig explores objects of desire in a fantastical and self-reflexive world of satirical masculinity. Flirting with compositional schemes and painting processes characteristic of idealized allegorical portraits by historical painters like Albrecht Dürer and Antonello da Messina, Karnig replaces classical mythological and religious subjects with icons of Western cinema. While Apollo, Venus, and other deities may have been at the forefront of the public imagination in the past, Karnig brings our recent cinema heroes to occupy this space for projection, reflection, and mimicry. But it is not a one for one swap; Karnig's imaginative restructuring renders bodies with slightly strange proportions into bizarre spaces, pulling the viewer further into the curious illusion of the picture. Actors like Keanu Reeves, Kyle Maclachlan, and Jean-Paul Belmondo are reimagined from films hardly sacred, but which are nevertheless adored. Softening features here, illuminating them there, and eschewing photo-realistic depiction, Karnig's work sublimates these identifiable figures into a metaphysical realm, but not without a comical wink at the absurdity of any attempt to do so.

Each painting is built up from an underlying ground, a warm tinted imprimatura, a transferred contour drawing, a layer of underpainting, and final glazes. The supports include copper and walnut wood panels, each of which requires its own unique preparation. The resulting surfaces are intimate and contemplative, belying the slightly sardonic tone of the subject matter.

- Elliot Richman

Max Xeno Karnig (b. 1990 in New York, New York, lives and works between Los Angeles and Berkeley, California). Karnig received a BA in both art history and studio art from the University of California, San Diego and an MFA from the University of California, Irvine. This will be his first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.





*The Blessing*, 2021.  
Oil on copper panel in walnut frame.  
16 x 12"



*The Spice*, 2021.  
Oil on copper panel in walnut frame.  
16 x 12"



*Leon Morin, 2021.*  
Oil on copper panel in walnut frame.  
7 x 5"



*Tadzio*, 2021.  
Oil on copper panel in walnut frame.  
7 x 5"



*City of Women*, 2022.  
Oil on walnut panel.  
17 x 10"



*The Visitor, 2022.*  
Oil on panel.  
6" diameter



*Spring Citrus*, 2021.  
Oil on canvas.  
7 x 10.5"





*Figs, 2021.*  
Oil on canvas.  
7 x 10.5"



*Persimmons*, 2021.  
Oil on canvas.  
6 x 10.5"