

DAVID RAPPENEAU

Mirage 2000

November 9 – December 17, 2022

It's accurate to say that David Rappeneau takes as his main subject the fantasy worlds of desire and consumption; more accurate still to say that the artist is focused on collapsing the distance between delusion, reverie, and nightmare. Image and reality, phantasma and flesh: all of these roil and swirl in Rappeneau's near-apocalyptic scenes, distorting our perspectives and lurching us ever forward into that zone of confluence where the virtual and IRL are never opposing binaries but are complementary and contrapuntal to our postlapsarian existence.

But what exactly have we lost in our descent from paradise? Rappeneau's visions of alterity, rendered in acrylic, ballpoint pen, pencil, and charcoal remind us that our appetites have remained insatiable, whetted by our entrée into the digital. The epicene figures who populate his scenes are rapacious in their consumption, but never seem to bear the deleterious effects of too many nights out, too many hits, too much pleasure. We take in the designer labels, the protruding clavicles, the spikes and leather; we witness these characters being emptied out even as Rappeneau has filled in their contours with light, deft, strokes of color and line.

Rappeneau's figures occupy a ground that is perpetually spinning. Lurch forward into these scenes, thick with activity and note that a joint is always smoldering, a cat continuously slinks across a ledge, climax is always on the verge of arrival. Crosses abound, thin talismans of security that feel more ominous than apotropaic. Fighter jets—like the titular stealth planes manufactured by the French military conglomerate Dassault Aviation, which once flew over the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan in UN and NATO operations—dot the sky overhead as Rappeneau's characters remain in the throes of ecstasy. Every explosion seen through a window is mirrored by a *petite mort* inside an edifice of false security. His figures remain transfixed by their own reflections, personas, thoughts—less so because of an obliviousness to the world around them than their recognition that what's in front of them appears, in a desert of lapsed sensation, to be so much more real.

That Rappeneau preserves the youth and beauty of his gaunt heroes and heroines is an indication of his wit and wry humor: many of his recent works depict the phenomenal experience of *peaking*. Yet, for every figure perched on that thin border of transcendence, there is another who observes life from below. It becomes hard to tell which is the more distorted view.

– Tausif Noor

DAVID RAPPENEAU is a French artist living and working in France. Recent exhibitions include Gladstone Gallery, Brussels (solo, 2021); FRAC Corsica, Corte; Super Dakota, Brussels; Galerie Derouillon, Paris; Peres Projects, Berlin; Edward Ressle, Shanghai; Gladstone Gallery, New York; Centre d'Art Contemporain La Synagogue de Delme, Delme; Galerie Crevecoeur, Paris (solo 2017). David Rappeneau has had solo exhibitions with Queer Thoughts in New York (2016), San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua (2016) and Chicago (2014). This is the artist's fourth exhibition with the gallery.