

## Tristan Unrau

### *The Earth Not a Globe*

February 18th - March 18th 2023

Sebastian Gladstone presents, "The Earth Not a Globe", the first solo exhibition of new paintings by Tristan Unrau with the gallery. The Exhibition will open Saturday February 18th with an opening from 6-9PM at the Hollywood gallery, and the show will run through March 18th, 2023.

"In Thomas Bernhard's *Woodcutters*, the narrator sits in the corner observing guests arriving at a dinner party hosted by old friends that he now detests. The narration that follows is a bitter indictment of the guests and the art scene of the Viennese bourgeoisie. But while he trashes everyone else, he can't deny his participation, the fact of his presence among them. What got him there, he admits, was that he "yielded himself to such disgraceful sentimentality."

Tristan Unrau approaches painting with a similar attitude. With a dark Bernhardian sense of humor about himself and the world, he witnesses his own moments of sentimentality and indulges in the romantic. Unrau draws on profane and reverent subject matter for this body of work, *The Earth Not a Globe*. In one painting, *Azalea Pond*, he'll give us a serene and technically impressive landscape; in another, *Sucker*, he reverses tone and pokes fun at the hubris of the last painting by showing a man bent over in the act of autofellatio. Though *Sucker* may allude to the often masturbatory quality of art making, Unrau is careful to avoid cynical irony, preferring a weirder sentimentality. He finds pathos in strange circumstances: two planes in a tearful embrace, a weepy cartoon blob imbibing, a sweating planet earth forced by the sun to play the flute.

Unrau paints in different styles not to show off his skill, but to attempt something more spiritually curious. He's trying to understand what it means for a painter to have a style - where does it come from, or how does it develop? If we can't rely on a consistent stylistic manner to analyze the work, we turn to the more ambiguous question of voice. What does the difference between style and voice look like, and what might the conditions for a pictorial practice be? The paintings collectively and humorously ask, "How does an artist find his voice?" Which leads to the more existential: how does one know oneself? By drawing on diverse references and techniques, Unrau can study this question, ultimately asking, "what's the difference between me and the rest of the world?"

Perhaps informed by his religious upbringing, Unrau's pictures reflect a search for meaning and skepticism with the artistic process. The paintings rattle with the anxiety of being stuck with ourselves, the absurdity of living in this world. This anxiety is most apparent in *Adrien*, a meticulously rendered portrait of a character from Eric Rohmer's *La Collectionneuse*. Rohmer's protagonists are always bourgeois subjects burdened by the comforts of their class and plagued by their political indifference and impotence. In the eponymous, *The Earth Not a Globe*, two airplanes tearfully embrace each other on a tarmac at dusk. Unrau mentioned coming up with the melodramatic motif years ago as a metaphor for a long-distance relationship he was in at the time. Still, it also functions as a political metaphor for the awkwardness with which nation-states console each other.

In *Shambolic Figure*, a cartoon blob monster sits in misery, clinging to a cocktail. This scene is lifted from a Warner Bros. cartoon in which Daffy Duck (voiced by the "velvet fog," Mel Tormé) sings to a crowd of despondent monsters at a moody club. The song ends with the lyrics, "They're independent fellas they don't live nine to fives, monsters live such interesting lives," a reference to the cliché schedule of an "artist's" life. The palette of rich reds, yellows, and greens found throughout the show repeats in *Odyssey*, the closest Unrau comes to abstraction. However, referencing the wormhole sequence in Kubrick's *Space Odyssey*, the large textured painting avoids pure abstraction by seeming to depict an artist's rendering of a black hole, supernova, or quantum phenomenon. Whereas elsewhere in the show, the figures in the paintings are plagued by ennui, trapped in their bodies or confronted with the prospect of infinity, here we are offered a rendering of infinity itself, the absurdity of unimaginable scales and densities.

Sometimes Tristan drives me around LA in his convertible, and we have the same conversation over and over. He often talks about 'fate.' Here I am reminded of *Interchange*, a Suesseian portrayal of a tangle of freeways, a metaphor for the illusion of choice, and symbolic of his own stylistic twists and turns. We sometimes go to the same places, drive on the same freeways, and listen to the same songs, but each time something new happens, and each time we're a little bit older.."

-Gracie Hadland





**Tristan Unrau**  
*The Decider, 2022*  
Oil on Linen  
73”H x 62”W  
(TU39)



**Tristan Unrau**  
*Azalea Pond, Central Park, 2022*  
Oil on Linen  
72”H x 63”W  
(TU40)



**Tristan Unrau**  
*Odyssey 2, 2022*  
Oil on linen  
72”H x 63”W  
(TU33)



**Tristan Unrau**  
*The Earth Not A Globe, 2022*  
Oil on Linen  
64”H x 51.5”W  
(TU42)



**Tristan Unrau**  
*Submission, 2022*  
Oil on linen  
64”H x 51.5”W  
(TU49)



**Tristan Unrau**  
*Invitation, 2022-23*  
oil on linen  
55”H x 43”W  
(TU51)



**Tristan Unrau**  
*Interchange, 2022*  
Oil on linen  
55”H x 43”W  
(TU48)



**Tristan Unrau**

*Adrien, 2023*

oil on linen  
55"H x 43"W  
(TU54)



**Tristan Unrau**

*Sucker, 2022*

Oil on Linen  
47"H x 38"W  
(TU38)



**Tristan Unrau**

*Shambolic Figure, 2022*

Oil on linen  
38"H x 47"W  
(TU43)



**Tristan Unrau**

*Condition, 2023*

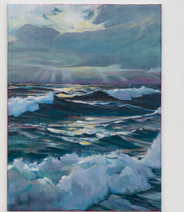
oil on linen  
20"H x 18"W  
(TU55)



**Tristan Unrau**

*Study for Odyssey 2, 2022*

oil on linen  
20"H x 16"W  
(TU53)



**Tristan Unrau**

*Seascape, 2023*

oil on linen  
20"H x 15"W  
(TU52)

## **Tristan Unrau (b. 1989)**

Lives and works in Los Angeles, United States

### **Education**

Master of Fine Arts, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Emily Carr University of Art + Design

### **Solo Exhibitions**

2023

The Earth Not A Globe, Sebastian Gladstone, Los Angeles, CA

2022

Dramatic Pictures, 56 Henry, New York, NY

2021

False Idols, Unit 17

2020

50 Million Years, Towards, Toronto, Canada

2018

A New Day, Phil Gallery, Los Angeles

Tristan Unrau, Unit 17, Vancouver, Canada

### **Group Exhibitions**

2021

North by Northeast, Kasmin Gallery, New York, New York

Soap Bubble in a Rose Garden, Stanley's, Los Angeles, California (2-person exhibition)

2019

SUPER, NATURAL, Unit 17, Vancouver, Canada

Residue for Art Toronto, Unit 17

2018

Drawings, Clint Roenisch Gallery, Toronto, Canada

2017

17:1, Unit 17, Vancouver, Canada

Cynthia Daignault: There is nothing I could say that I haven't thought before, FLAG Art Foundation, New York

2016

Vancouver Special: Ambivalent Pleasures, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada

### **Residencies**

2013

The Banff Centre

### **Awards and Recognitions**

2017

Finalist for the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) Canada Painting Competition

2015

Finalist for the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) Canada Painting Competition