

Orion Martin

*Faboo*

May 12–June 24, 2023

Orion Martin's paintings mine histories of visual culture to engineer wild hybridizations, often employing the human figure as a site at which varying optical and perceptual models coincide. For *Faboo*, Martin continues his investigation of the entanglement between gender, costume, and performance. In headstands and high kicks, arranged alone or in pairs, the figures in Martin's new works interface with a multitude of references, organized with the defiance of spatial and physical causality that has become a signature feature of the artist's work. Martin's source material traffics in contradiction and anachronism, as he examines the paradoxical flamboyance of military costume, the vestigial futurism of Y2K aesthetics, the awkward perspectival efforts of the early Renaissance, and more. Staged within a theatrical, compressed space, the resulting works comprise futuristic proposals implicating technology, evolution, power and desire.

Through his fluency across visual modalities and techniques, Martin populates his canvas with signifiers of control, exchange, gender and sexuality, visually mapping the ways in which these forces intersect and conflate. *Beyond Birth and Death* (all paintings 2023) shows a technicolor physique in a sterile, neoclassical hall. A Palladian window frames the feet of the inverted figure, from which radiates a dizzying constellation of abstracted life cycles and DNA, as though immaculately conceived. Across twisting double helical extensions, portals to various imagery arise: bulbous amoeba, a youthful face, and a coldly metallic skull. Isolated as though by the frame of a microscope, these images appear as though various potentialities of a genetic sequence, exquisitely interrelated by Martin's hand.

Two girls' high kicks in *Donk Bang* appear to span the depth of their pictorial container, yet a lightshow emerging from the contours of their legs suggests further recesses. The soles of their sneakers meet the flatness of the painting's literal surface, necessitating the dramatic foreshortening that is exaggerated further in Martin's works on paper, on view in the back gallery. *Financial Domination* examines power wielded by desire. Informed by a photograph of the artist in incomplete drag, two characters in garters and hip pads telegraph sexual domination, financial prowess, and the theatricality of gender. Meanwhile, *Mother* depicts Martin in full drag, paired with a stack of eggs insinuating maternity. Black pixels animate a sequence of "cracking," the fully modeled eggs decomposing into visual static as though under the pressure of their physical weight. In *Changing Room*, two males undergo a futuristic fitting, appearing to be paired with their militaristic dress through digitized superimposition. Contoured fragments dress the figure to the left, modeled with a smoothness and frontality that denies gravitational force, while the figure to the right is covered only by the decidedly two-dimensional—panels from a sewing pattern sit squarely on the picture plane, casting gentle shadows that further complicate the painting's spatial logic. In *Vintage Girl*, Martin takes reductive rendering to its most extreme, mingling cartoons and degraded pixelation among sleekly rendered limbs.

Orion Martin lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions include High Art, Arles (2022); Derosia (Bodega), New York (2021, 2018, 2016); High Art, Paris (2019) and Corbett vs. Dempsey, Chicago (2017). Group exhibitions include Hudson House, Hudson (2022); W Space, Qingdao (2021); Mao Space, Shanghai (2020); Bel Ami, Los Angeles (2018); and Tanya Leighton, Berlin (2018). Martin's work is in the collections of The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami.