



CLAIRE LEHMANN

The Understudy

Presented with Bel Ami

April 20 – May 25, 2024

709 N Hill Street #103

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Page and Bel Ami are pleased to present *The Understudy*, Claire Lehmann's debut solo exhibition in Los Angeles. For this collaboration, Lehmann has created a new group of eight paintings, which continues her engagement with the universe of mimetic representation.

Lehmann's latest sequence of works includes a space-age garden of roses blooming on an outmoded server rack; a perspectively skewed tabletop scene featuring a sugar-topped cake baked in the shape of a lamb; and a pseudo-Madonna and Child in which the central figures are replaced by an obstetric "phantom"—an educational dummy used for medical simulations.

The artist scavenges this content from a diverse set of sources—obsolete computer files, historical exhibition catalogues, medical textbooks—mining the history of representational painting alongside that of industrial, vernacular, and technical imaging to create uncanny, anachronistic tableaux. Lehmann restages her source materials through a free-associative process, merging ancient and contemporary visual artifacts in ways that feel simultaneously familiar and mysterious. Within these varied depictions, central themes emerge: technology's spells, sensuality and transience, and the fastness of images.

Though Lehmann's source materials are seemingly disparate, each exemplifies the unseen processes that shape the appearances of our image-drenched world. Her visual precursors include traditional art-historical genres, motifs, or optical styles; industrial procedures that govern analog photography or motion capture; digital image files used to test or train new algorithms; and other graphic customs. Moving beyond a strict dichotomy between the artificial and the organic, Lehmann's paintings explore these categories' interconnectedness, forming a subtle fusion that is neither overly scientific nor naturalistic, but rather a hybrid with its own essence.

For Lehmann, each painting results from an inquiry into the contents of the image world's unconscious—the substrate that supports the forms of the visible realm. Tenderly and precisely painted, these works are suffused with a numinous quality; there is a sense of suspension inherent in these scenes, as though a divine light has briefly flooded the view but may soon blink out.