



Tim Brawner

Feels Like Heaven

06 April - 05 May 2024

Washington, DC: von ammon co is pleased to announce the opening of *Feels Like Heaven*, a solo show by American artist Tim Brawner. This is Brawner's first solo show with von ammon co and the gallery's thirty first project in its current location.

The suite of works on view work as a motley ensemble to convey an overall *confusion of desire*. For a period of about two hundred years in the Late Middle Ages, a trend in funerary art called *transi*, or *cadaver monuments*, emerged in cathedrals and crypts throughout Europe. A sharp counterpoint to the more antiseptic *gisant*, the *transi* depicted the putrefied, worm-eaten corpse of the interred, often carved virtuosically in sumptuous materials such as marble or alabaster. These recumbent figures feel radical to the contemporary viewer, but make a compelling argument for the correct preparation of the elite for eternity: the mortal husk remains in the abbey or tomb while something purer sublimates into the heavens.

Brawner's polymorphic, ever-changing painting style mixes various techniques that seem more at home at the nail salon or in front of the beautician's mirror than at the easel: soft brushstrokes, aerosol shading, and dotting of textured pearls constitute the final image, usually in the sweet palette of the makeup compact. The cosmetic veneer of the fashion magazine supplants the cool permanence of alabaster in the conjuring of these cadaver monuments. Brawner takes inspiration from the visual culture of graphic novels, wherein drawers or boxes of discarded source material are sometimes called *morgues*.

The common disposition of the painting subjects is a frothy expression of ecstasy, satisfaction or achievement: glamorous subjects enjoy cocktails, luxuriate among stoles of fur or jewelry, or strike self-assured poses of arch-earnestness or melodrama. These tropes—all from the wheelhouse of the luxury good advertisement—become immediately confounded by the context of the painting: a satisfied leading lady grins in spite of her desiccated torso; a greenish skull with a perfect blowout quaffs a shot of tequila; a figure in orgasmic ecstasy is undistracted by her tracheotomy. Brawner uses the contemporary lexicon of desire and envy to draw the viewer into a more serious discussion about how one can really prepare for eternity, all contemporary things considered.

In several of the works—some of the largest canvases, in fact—Brawner traffics in the most treacherous waters of contemporary painting: the cute. Responding to the pernicious infantilization of the adult consumer by major corporate entities (who thereby serve up the cuddly animal beneath the same hungry gaze as the sexy man or woman), Brawner incorporates kittens, giraffes and other farm animals into the same airless sphere as the coquette and the ingenue. The overall result is a unified realm of distorted attractors, implicating the viewer not only in the true nature of his or her desires, but also in his or her relationship with aging, dying, and eternity. Like the medieval subject contemplating the mouldering cadaver of a feudal lord, Brawner uses his beautician's touch to cast these objects of desire *in medias res*, halfway between resolution and expiration.

von ammon co was founded in 2019 in its current Georgetown location. Gallery hours are Saturdays and Sundays, 12-6pm, and by appointment. For more information and image requests, please visit www.vonammon.co or email info@vonammon.co.