

Matt Kenny
Tower Paintings

June 1, 2024 – August 2, 2024

56 HENRY is pleased to announce *Tower Paintings*, an exhibition by Matt Kenny, on view from June 1 to August 2, 2024, at the gallery's 105 Henry Street space. This marks Kenny's first solo show with the gallery.

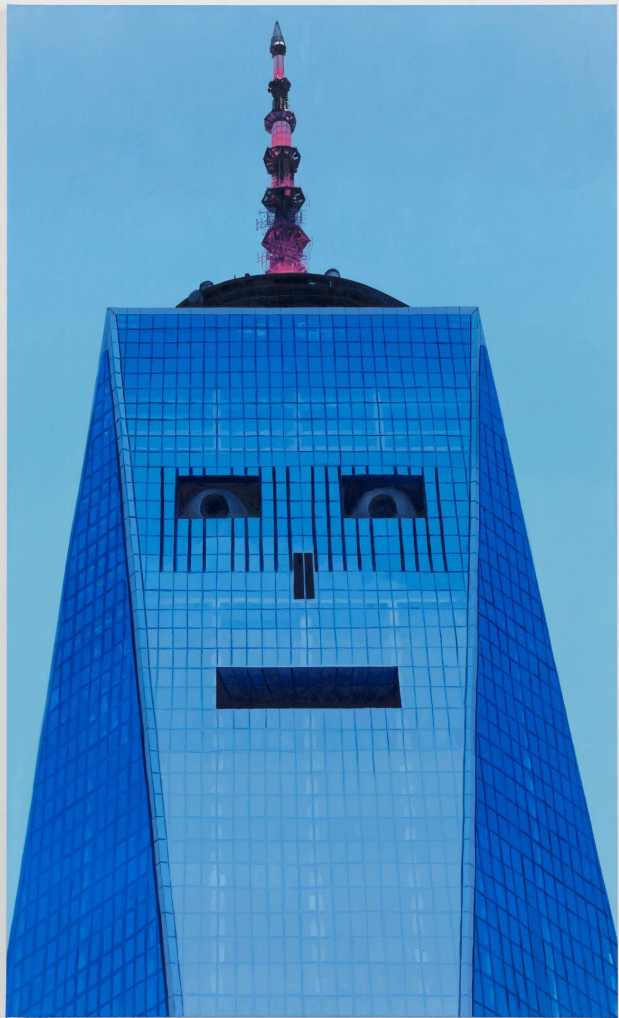
Tower Paintings continues Kenny's exploration of One World Trade Center, a symbol deeply intertwined with post-9/11 New York. Kenny presents five paintings, each offering a unique perspective on the iconic structure.

The central group of paintings, *New Landmarks*, *One World Trade Center*, and *Portrait*, all made in 2024, anthropomorphize the building, giving it a whimsical, surreal, and even menacing appearance. These larger works present the building as a comic-strip character, uncomfortable in its mirrored skin, resembling a modern Frankenstein made of steel and glass. The human-like towers seem alive, embodying a sense of unease and conflict. Their distorted features and exaggerated forms suggest a building at odds with its identity, caught between its symbolic weight and its physical presence. This cartoonish portrayal brings a sense of irony and critique, highlighting the building's struggle to find its place in the post-9/11 landscape. It can in fact be seen from Henry Street, the gallery's location when looking west towards lower Manhattan.

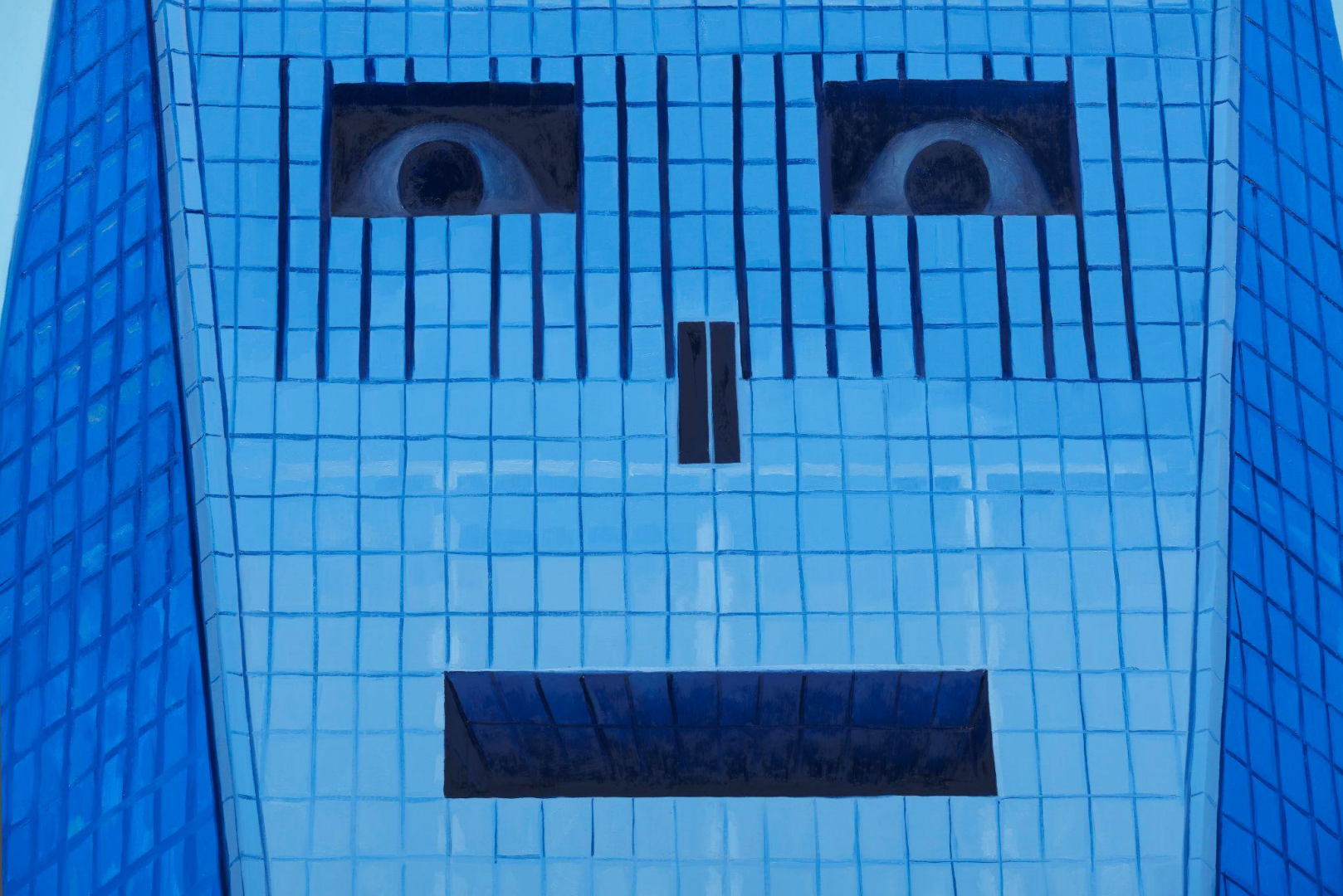
Kenny's use of a whimsical style in these paintings is central to their impact. The tower's exaggerated features and almost comical discomfort reflect deeper existential themes. The building's humanoid character suggests a being struggling with its existence, an entity grappling with its role as both a symbol of resilience and a reminder of tragedy. This duality creates a powerful commentary on the human tendency to imbue structures with meaning and the uneasy relationship between those meanings and the physical objects themselves.

In contrast, the second group, *The House on Penhorn Creek* and *Northeast Corridor*, both 2024, takes us out of the city, depicting the tower from a distance in a photorealistic style reminiscent of traditional landscape painting. These works transport the viewer to a more serene and contemplative setting viewed from Secaucus, New Jersey. The tower appears peaceful yet surreal as it grows out of the horizon like a tree mushroom, or flower. The photorealistic technique harks back to classical landscape painting, carrying references to the history of the genre and its romantic traditions. These landscapes evoke a sense of quiet reflection, contrasting sharply with the frenetic energy of the cityscape and the anthropomorphized tower in the first. The distant view of the tower, rendered with meticulous detail, underscores its place within the context of nature and the urban environment. This perspective invites viewers to consider the tower as an isolated monument and a part of a larger, interconnected world. The meticulous detail and lifelike representation ground it in the real world while imbuing it with a sense of otherworldliness, suggesting a more profound, almost mystical connection.

The exhibition delves into the building's myriad narratives and their impact on collective consciousness. Through these contrasting groups, Kenny explores the multifaceted nature of One World Trade Center. The tower grapples with its identity and symbolism, while the distant, photorealistic views situate it within a broader, more contemplative context. Together, these works create a rich, layered narrative that encourages viewers to reflect on the building's significance and its place within the urban and natural landscapes. The paintings reveal the underlying contradictions in our society, illustrating how the building sits uncomfortably between the real, the symbolic, and the imagined.



Matt Kenny
New Landmarks, 2024
Oil on canvas
75 x 45 in (190.5 x 114.3 cm)



Detail of *New Landmarks*



Detail of *New Landmarks*



Detail of *New Landmarks*



Matt Kenny
One World Trade, 2024
Oil on canvas
75 x 45 in (190.5 x 114.3 cm)



Detail of *One
World Trade*



Detail of *One World Trade*



Matt Kenny
Portrait, 2024
Oil on canvas
75 x 45 in (190.5 x 114.3 cm)



Detail of
Portrait



Detail of
Portrait



Matt Kenny
*The House on Penhorn
Creek, 2024*
Oil on canvas
54 x 72 in (137.2 x 182.9 cm)



Matt Kenny
Northeast Corridor, 2024
Oil on canvas
21 x 25 in (53.3 x 63.5 cm)



Matt Kenny
Knuckles, 2022
Oil on canvas
29 x 24 inches (73.7 x 61 cm)

Information

Matt Kenny

(b. 1979, Kansas City, MO)

Kenny earned a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Halsey McKay Gallery, The National Exemplar, Karma, Derek Eller Gallery and 55 Gansevoort in New York. Recent group exhibitions at Halsey McKay Gallery; , Cooper Cole Gallery, Toronto; The National Exemplar; James Fuentes, New York; V1 Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark; Galleria Alessandra Bonomo, Rome, among others.

Kenny lives and works in New York, NY.