

WINTER STREET GALLERY

Louis Eisner

Persona non grata

July 12 — August 11, 2024

Opening reception: Friday, July 12, 4-7pm

Winter Street Gallery is pleased to present *Persona non grata*, a solo exhibition of new paintings and sculptures by Louis Eisner. On view from July 12 through August 11, this body of work embraces contrarian and oppositional elements as a central theme. Contrasting fundamentals — land and sea, light and dark — are foregrounded in a bold set of works that resonate beyond their immediate subjects to enter the realm of abstraction, surrealism, and irreverence.

Persona non grata may be viewed as the sum of two highly distinct parts: the artworks' visual elements and the cultural commentary implicitly conveyed. From these vantage points, Eisner presents opposing forces that deny any literal or narrative meaning, instead embracing an idiosyncratic approach that challenges and enlivens conventions within art.

In the gallery space, viewers are first met with two large-format paintings, each nearly seven and a half feet wide. The grand stature of these paintings parallels their imagery, in which elemental compositions featuring human inventions are rendered with rough-hewn intensity and descriptive economy. In one work, the bow of an archaic-looking boat rises into view, its glistening lead coloration in striking contrast to the light green surroundings. Loosely evoking a biblical passage, the painting stops short of any narrative specificity. Another man-made object — a tire — punctuates an indeterminate depth of field, surrounded by staccato brush marks.

Affixed to the surface of the canvases are sheets of wallpaper salvaged by the artist. The patterned surface of yellow and orange-hued flowers and leaves peek through textured brushstrokes, complicating the sense of the rendered environment. Juxtaposed with unnatural painted green tones, the material and medium create a flatness that confuses the scene, repositioning the objects and horizon lines as geometric and abstract.

A literary touchstone for the exhibition is William Burroughs' 1959 novel *Naked Lunch*, a fever dream of loosely connected vignettes that follows the descent of a drug addict into the underworld. In the text, Burroughs introduces abject characters who have been cast off from society and who, through their existence as "monsters," "degenerates," and "freaks," become the scapegoats for mankind in order to appease the wrath of gods. In two of the paintings' titles, *S.A.A Rambler* and *F.C.S Mariner*, Eisner abbreviates explicit names ("Spare A** Annie" and "Fish C**t Sam") which are found in Burroughs' novel. *Persona non grata* perhaps begs the age-old question of art's place in relation to a higher power, presenting a wistful view of the world underscored by yearning, allegory, and a sense of poetic dissonance.

Louis Eisner (b. 1988, Los Angeles) lives and works in New York City. He is a painter and a sculptor whose work moves freely through diverse genres of art. Graduating from Columbia University in 2011 with a BA in Art History, his practice is rooted in a strong sense of classicism. Landscape, portraiture, and still life painting form a basis for which his rough style of realism equivocates what is real with what is imagined. His work has been included in gallery and institutional exhibitions including those at Fitzpatrick Gallery, Paris; CLEARING, New York; The Journal Gallery, New York; Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; Almine Rech, New York; Jan Kaps, Cologne; Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Sint-Martens-Latem, Belgium; Fondazione Pino Pascali di Polignano a Mare, Italy, and the American Academy in Rome.