

GOSWELL ROAD

22 Rue de l'Échiquier, 75010 Paris

(xxxix) Archie Chekatouski, YOU CAN DO SO MUCH MORE WITH A CHAIR
THAN YOU CAN WITH A PAINTING?

Exhibition 7 September - 12 October, 2024

open Thursday - Saturday 14H - 18H

When I first met Archie, I thought he said that he comes from the 'Ballets Russes'. How marvellous! The grand spectacles of Diaghilev and Nijinsky, the ornate costumes of Bakst, returned after one hundred years! What glamour! The mundane reality, Belarus, was a disappointment. But this disappointment, this comic error on my part, and this shortfall between the idealised image and reality is fitting for the artist's works. Another anecdote: on Instagram Archie posted a picture of a mural he had made, in which he had used all the coloured pens he had available, scribbling with each as if to test they still worked, in a square formation, like swatches but at regular intervals, like a grid. I described it - intending this to be a compliment - as 'Kindergarten Sol Le Witt'. What I'm trying to show is that his practice turns upon modesty, bathetic humour, stupidity and silliness, high art brought down to the ordinary, the anecdotal, even at times the inconsequential or meaningless. His is an art that promises something - a show of abstract paintings - only to deliver on this promise in the most understated ways - the paintings were just pieces of coloured paper stuck onto cheap canvas bought at Flying Tiger. If he released a perfume, it would be called Anticlimax.

You might think this silliness is itself merely a joke at the expense of contemporary art, but stupidity and disappointment are oddly central to the field. Think of Warhol's dumb repetitions of vapid mass media signs, or his early films in which he documents whatever happens, however mundane and meaningless, until the reel runs out. Then there is what Leo Bersani termed the 'increasing negation of meaning' in Rothko's late work, as his canvas approaches pure presence, devoid of content. There's even something bathetic in conceptualism: the ever-diminishing returns in the gaps between ideal, concept, word, image and thing. Let's not forget that these high-minded efforts were aimed at democratising art.

But Archie is no Warhol, Rothko or Kosuth, nor does he pretend to be. His works are both homage to these methods, and a joke, a kind of humorous debasement of the pretensions of high art, as in the current show where Franz West chairs, made to be social, adaptable, are extended by being recreated using IKEA furniture. Archie's work is all about these in-betweens: pretentious and demotic, art historical and every day, homage and parody, researched and yet dumbly copied, labour intensive but lazy - they are both at once and therefore neither. A certain ontology of art giggles and collapses - although that's far too pretentious a description for some flatpack chairs.

And by making such connections to high art, I'm not trying to build Archie up, to return some of the lustre lost when I realised he would not recreate Nijinsky's jeté battu. In the current show at Goswell Road he does reference West's adaptives, adapting them to those on a budget. But never one to be less than ambivalent, Archie's exhibition includes a contrary move. Where West extended the commodity and its fetishism to make art useful, this show includes a nod to Piero Manzoni's critique of the commodification of art and artist. Instead of signing tins of turds, Archie has put his signature on cans of beer to be used in the opening, thereby folding the event of sale and promotion back into his art. This work also refers to the artist's own beer-stained canvases, previously shown by Goswell Road, themselves a loutish reference to Warhol's piss paintings, recast as the result of hard drinking. Nothing is original, nothing is sacred, nothing is resolved. The white cube itself is brought down to the domestic, taking the form of a white refrigerator covered in paintings. Echoing in my head is Nene Leakes on *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* screaming 'a white refrigerator!' as if that were the ultimate sign of hard times. A fridge covered in pictures, but containing only beer does shout desperation, as if owned by a divorced dad whose kids no longer visit. And on the matter of hard times, we have to ask ourselves if art can afford its democratisation if that means giving up its intellectual pretensions, and would we want that anyway? I need a drink.

Paul Clinton

Archie Chekatouski (born 1996 in Minsk, Belarus) lives and works in Paris. His works are touchingly silly and beautifully simple.

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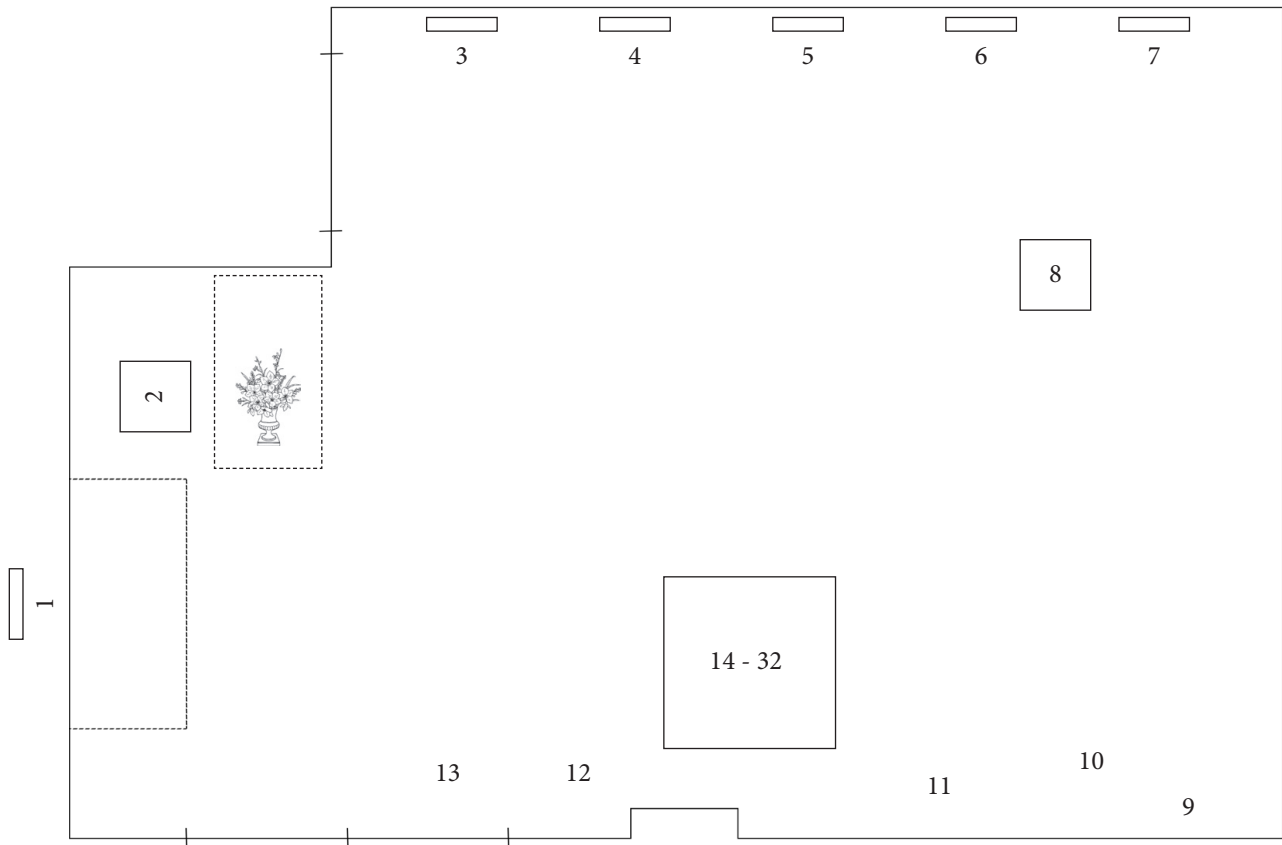
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- 1 *Chair (lavender, white)*, 2024 (mixed media on IKEA chair)
- 2 *Chair (black, yellow)*, 2024 (mixed media on IKEA chair)
- 3 *Chair (lemon, brown)*, 2024 (mixed media on IKEA chair)
- 4 *Chair (sky, oxblood)*, 2024 (mixed media on IKEA chair)
- 5 *Chair (seafoam, peach)*, 2024 (mixed media on IKEA chair)
- 6 *Chair (silver, pink)*, 2024 (mixed media on IKEA chair)
- 7 *Chair (red, blue)*, 2024 (mixed media on IKEA chair)
- 8 *Chair (orange, grass)*, 2024 (mixed media on IKEA chair)
- 9 *Paint Painting*, 2024 (IKEA paint)
- 10 *Marker Painting*, 2020 (Monoprix markers)
- 11 *Pen Painting*, 2024 (Flying Tiger pens)
- 12 *Paint Painting*, 2024 (Flying Tiger metallic paint)
- 13 *Paint Painting*, 2020 (Flying Tiger paint)
- 14 *Paint-by-Numbers (Copenhagen)*, 2023 (paint)
- 15 *Paint-by-Numbers (Copenhagen)*, 2022 (paint)
- 16 *Paint-by-Numbers (Copenhagen)*, 2024 (paint)
- 17 *Paint-by-Numbers (Monkey)*, 2022 (paint)
- 18 *Paint-by-Numbers (Monkey)*, 2023 (paint)
- 19 *Paint-by-Numbers (Monkey)*, 2023 (paint)
- 20 *Paint-by-Numbers (Mandala)*, 2023 (paint)
- 21 *Paint-by-Numbers (Mandala)*, 2023 (paint)
- 22 *Paint-by-Numbers (Mandala)*, 2024 (paint)
- 23 *Paint-by-Numbers (Flowers)*, 2022 (paint)
- 24 *Paint-by-Numbers (Panda)*, 2023 (paint)
- 25 *Paint-by-Numbers (Giraffe)*, 2022 (paint)
- 26 *Lighter Painting (green)*, 2024 (BiC on canvas)
- 27 *Lighter Painting (blue)*, 2024 (BiC on canvas)
- 28 *Lighter Painting (black)*, 2024 (BiC on canvas)
- 29 *Beer Painting*, 2024 (beer on canvas)
- 30 *Beer Painting*, 2024 (beer on canvas)
- 31 *Beer Painting*, 2024 (beer on canvas)
- 32 *Beer*, 2024 (marker on Kronenbourg) *open edition*

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