

## **Leon Eisermann**

*Bothered by the past, Burdened by the future*

January 4th - February 8th, 2025

Everyone has some idea of how to draw a skeleton—often a simplified, cartoonish figure that lacks anatomical accuracy but captures an essence familiar to all. This almost comical portrayal is a far cry from the complex, interwoven structures that underpin our physical forms. Yet, even a child who has never seen an actual skeleton could sketch something resembling the brittle framework of the human body. Skeletons strip away individuality, leaving behind only the shared architecture of our mortality.

To know one's skeleton is to acknowledge one's fragility. It can serve as a stark reminder of the boundary between life and death, whether through a sudden fracture—a sharp, intrusive awareness of our vulnerability—or the morbid imagery of an exposed skull. If one's skull is visible, it implies a dire state: the owner is either deceased, undergoing a life-threatening procedure like open brain surgery, or gravely injured. In such moments, the skeleton shifts from an abstract concept to a visceral reality.

Yet paradoxically, the skeleton has long been a figure of humor and whimsy in popular culture. In the 1929 Disney classic *The Skeleton Dance*, skeletons cavort gleefully in the moonlight, while playing each other's ribcages like xylophones. Here, the skeleton is a jester, a playful reminder of death that softens its existential weight. In the *Danse Macabre*, emerging during the aftermath of the Black Plague, skeletal figures lead humans from all walks of life—kings, peasants, clergy—into the afterlife. The skeletal dancing allowed for a cathartic reckoning with tragedy and loss. In contemporary culture, the skeleton, and in-particular the skull, exists as a moniker of fear, horror, death, toughness. Yet, the skeletal symbol is so omnipresent in movies, ephemera, products and clothing, it has lost its fervor—instead appearing kitsch and cringe—holding the potency of a doorknob.

Leon Eisermann's paintings delve into this interplay between life, death, and the skeleton's multifaceted symbolism. In his pictures, skeletons are stretched, distorted, painted upside down, and fragmented, becoming almost unrecognizable. They are not merely anatomical studies but embodiments of internal chaos and existential questioning. These figures are veiled by scratches, marks, and overlapping elements that obscure their forms, creating surfaces that resemble a tangled web of the artists' own interior monologue. Eisermann's paintings do not narrate a linear story; instead, they reflect the fragmented nature of thought as one tries to reconcile life, death and the in-between.