

Something like living occurs:

Alessandra Acierno, Max Jahn, Nick Jensen, Aks Misyuta

May 2 – June 28, 2025

“The soul has to stay where it is,
Even though restless, hearing raindrops at the pane,
The sighing of autumn leaves thrashed by the wind,
Longing to be free, outside, but it must stay
Posing in this place. It must move
As little as possible. This is what the portrait says.”
– John Ashbery

John Ashbery’s ekphrastic poem “Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror” considers the eponymous self-portrait by the Mannerist painter Parmigianino, ruminating on the impossible task of creating a portrait. How does an artist arrest the “restless” movement of a soul? Can it be transposed onto the surface of a painting? These issues of subjectivity and artistic representation run through the works in *Something like living occurs*, an exhibition featuring Alessandra Acierno, Max Jahn, Nick Jensen, and Aks Misyuta.

Like Parmigianino’s disorienting self-portrait, which distorts the artist’s reflection and the studio around him, many works in *Something like living occurs* probe the distinction between figure and ground. These warped pictorial spaces emphasize the tension between the reproduction of a subject and its abstraction, creating ambiguities that invite the viewer’s interpretation. In Nick Jensen’s atmospheric paintings, the outlines that define his figures are indefinite. Instead, his subjects evaporate into washes of muted watercolor and acrylic, permeated by their environments. Aks Misyuta’s compositions also place their subjects in liminal surroundings. Her figures take on the proportion and anonymity of cartoon figures, with obscure, generalized features and rounded geometric bodies. Describing this alienating approach to figuration, Misyuta notes, “all the figures, like balloons, are floating in their own pensive universe.”

Alessandra Acierno’s paintings create ambiguous narratives that often entangle multiple figures, obscuring where one ends and another begins. A rooster eclipsing the face of a boy or two interwoven people wrestling allegorize the artist’s interest in staging encounters that challenge the boundaries of her forms. In Max Jahn’s works, the primacy of his subject’s expression often supersedes a painting’s sense of place, cropping out any distractions from his attention to faithfully reproducing each sitter. These process-driven portraits are borne of frequent extended sittings with his models. Jahn’s *Self Portrait With a Japanese Vase*, however, exposes the inherent contradictions of representational painting. Evoking Parmigianino’s painting, it depicts the artist’s reflection doubled in the beveled edge of a mirror, shattering the illusion of representing a subject in their entirety. We are reminded that a portrait offers only a partial view. As Ashbery has it, “the whole is stable within instability.”

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Alessandra Acierno (b. 1994, Charleston, SC) is an American painter based in Tel Aviv, Israel. She has participated in solo exhibitions at Maya Gallery, Tel Aviv (2024) and Gateway Gallery, Maryland Institute College of Art (2015). Selected group exhibitions include MAMA Projects, NY (2024); Thierry Goldberg, NY (2024); Tagli, London (2024); and Afula Gallery, Israel (2020). She received her BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in 2016 and her MFA from Bezalel Academy of Art in 2021.

Max Jahn (b. 1998, Berlin, Germany) is a painter based in Berlin, Germany. He has had solo exhibitions at Cabin, Berlin (2024) and Nosbüsch & Stucke, Berlin (2023). He has participated in group exhibitions at Open Forum, Berlin (2024).

Nick Jensen (b. 1984, London, UK) is a British painter based in London, UK. He has participated in solo exhibitions at Duarte Siqueira, Seoul (2024); Galeriepcp, Paris (2024); Union Gallery, London (2023, 2021); Kristin Hjellegjerde, Berlin (2022); Parlour Gallery, London (2018); and Twelve Around One, London (2012). Selected group exhibitions include Fores Project, London (2024); JariLager Gallery, Cologne (2022); Mirror, Plymouth (2021); Frestonian Gallery, London (2020); Sid Motion, London (2017); and Kristian Day, London (2017). He received his BFA from Central Saint Martins in 2007 and his MFA from Chelsea School of Art and Design in 2010.

Aks Misyuta (b. 1984, Bryansk, Russia) is a painter and sculptor based in Istanbul, Turkey. She has participated in solo exhibitions at Peres Projects, Seoul (2024); Galerie Art:Concept, Paris (2023); Sébastien Bertrand, Geneva (2021, 2020); and Union Pacific, London (2020). Selected group exhibitions include Tegners Museum, Dronningmølle (2022); Palazzo Barbaro, Venice (2022); Woaw Gallery, Hong Kong (2021); Phillips, New York (2021); and Cob Gallery, London (2018). Misyuta's work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Buenos Aires; X Museum, Beijing; and the Niarchos Collection, Paris. She received her BA in Journalism from Bryansk State University in 2007.