

Psychic...Powerless

May 24th, 2025–July 19th, 2025

As It Stands is pleased to present *Psychic...Powerless...* a solo exhibition by Los Angeles based painter Jake Fagundo.

Throughout Fagundo's work, narrative is practically obliterated. Quite like Surrealist literature, images become tonal rather than illustrative. In the past few years of his practice, Fagundo has developed parallel bodies of work: one group rendered from miscellaneous found photographs, the other group entirely abstract, almost impulsive in their composition. The former forced Fagundo to maintain a relatively strong degree of restraint over his artistic autonomy. The latter pushed him to open up his immediate intuition and allow himself to be led by his instincts. These compartmentalized processes pushed each body of work further towards a dispensation of content for the sake of form. *Psychic... Powerless...* merges the yin back into the yang. Here, there is an emphasis on making images abstract and transforming abstractions into images. Fagundo is mining photographic material for all the formal potential it has to offer, distilling them into compositional ingredients, and improvising them into intuitively devised abstractions.

Interested in efficient methods for extracting the formal potential of images, his sources in this group of paintings are deconstructed, rearranged, and reassembled. One depicts a cowboy once right-side up, effaced, and rendered again up-side down. In another a self-portrait is obscured by a *memento mori*. A particular painting that comes close to the traditional narrative function of content is his potato still life, a sly nod to his German influences. Here more than any others Fagundo channels the comedic sensibility of influences like Kippenberger or Oehlen. But still, purpose remains evasive. More palpable is the tonal mood and consortium of influences. It is classically art for art's sake.

In his lecture *After The Beautiful* on the radical transformation of Western art in the works of Manet, Hegel scholar Robert Pippin remarks that Manet's characters, for instance *The Old Musician*, are unique for their disconnectedness. They seem to live apart from each other. Manet employs the same symbols—a dove, a rosebush, etc—which in the previous epoch would have been imbued with a spiritual meaning. But in his time he paints them in such a way that it becomes impossible to establish a coherent narrative linking one subject to another. For Pippin, Manet implicitly suggests that the secularization of society transformed the function of the artistic experience and dispensed with the need for narrative continuity. This notion of fragmentary pastiche littered with evacuated symbols feels quintessentially Postmodern. But it does have a historical legacy reaching deep into the beginnings of modernist culture. Fagundo is trodding this historical legacy, transforming his subjects from images into impressions. The substance becomes the surface and the surface becomes the substance.

— Grant Edward Tyler

Jake Fagundo (b. 1997) lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent exhibitions include “Ours Is The Hand That Sews Time” at M. Leblanc, Chicago (2024), “Something Bit Me Bad” at Temple Projects, Los Angeles (2024), *Sprezzatura* at As It Stands, Los Angeles (2024), “There Before Time” at Imperial Gallery, Los Angeles (2023), and “No Time Like the Present” at Praz-Delavallade, Los Angeles (2023). He received his bachelor of fine arts from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2021.