

Spring Summer 26

Simon Mielke

6.6–II.7.26

English

Two women walking, looking, shopping in canted angles with wide-angle distortions. There is something distinctly unpainterly about these paintings. Nowadays it is trite to point out how we are living in a mixed media era. Inevitably and inescapably, an artist would have to go to great lengths to avoid this. If only because reality has become mediated to an unprecedented degree, which is also out of our control. The signal is always processed, our perception of the world affected.

It used to be frowned upon when painters painted from photos, and those who did so were encouraged to compensate for the camera's optical distortions. In short, to ensure the painting does not look like a photograph. Smart phone cameras affect how we see (this point should be uncontroversial by now). It used to be the colors of Kodak or Fuji, today it is the latest image format devised by programmers at Apple or some other software developer.

My own phone takes wide-angle pictures and struggles with exposure, never really capturing the beauty of what I see. My phone images tend more toward the grotesque. These kinds of images seem quite fine for the average person, though, so long as they document the here and now, and allow it to be shared with friends and family as fast as possible. The everyday becomes a stage. Each interaction is digitally processed.

By beginning from iPhone images of unspectacular, everyday life – two women walking through a city on a sunny day – staged but taken casually, and consciously painting in the inherent characteristics of a phone camera (blown out highlights included), filtering or “hand-processing” them, so to speak, through his paint, Simon Mielke's images foreground the artificiality of the image-making process. It is all artifice, sure, but this is not exactly what the makers of smart phone cameras would have us believe. Mielke is close to his figures in the initial moment the image is made. The subjects would be aware of his presence.

His subjects are people in action, moving dynamically through unspectacular places, their features indistinct, sketched in just enough. This is an everyday realism that knows the “real” is a complicated notion. On some canvases, the figures are waiting or standing and looking, but more often walking, viewed (rather than observed, if I may risk a distinction) from front, back, and side, the angle often canted as if capturing the moment outweighed the rules of fine composition. The phone wants to determine or direct how we see – these paintings are an act to objectivize that particular way of seeing.

Ted Fendt

Berlin, May 25, 2026

Ted Fendt (b. 1989, Philadelphia, USA) is a filmmaker, translator and projectionist. Fendt lives and works in Berlin.

Bio

Arthur Coquelin is pleased to present *Spring Summer 26*, an exhibition of new works by German artist Simon Mielke.

Simon Mielke (b. 1990, Essen) lives and works in Cologne, Germany.

Recent exhibitions include Rinde am Rhein, Düsseldorf (2026); Clementin Seedorf, Cologne (2024); Lucas Hirsch, Düsseldorf (2024, 2023, 2022, 2021); Museum Kurhaus, Kleve (2024); Catherine Zeta, Cologne (2022); Kunstverein Siegen (2022); Löwengasse, Cologne (2021); Peach, Rotterdam (2021); Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg (2020).

Simon Mielke graduated from Folkwang University of the Arts, Essen in 2017 and from Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, Class of Trisha Donnelly in 2022.

Spring Summer 26 is his first solo exhibition in Paris.

Opening reception: Saturday, June 6th, 5–8pm

RUE DES FILLES
DU CALVAIRE, 25
PARIS III

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