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Matthew Hansel *Me, My Shadow and All of Our Friends*

(EXHIBITION) 23.05 – 13.07.2024
(GALLERY) LIVOURNE 32

rodolphe janssen is pleased to announce the first solo show at the gallery of American-artist **Matthew Hansel**. *Me, My Shadow and All of Our Friends* is opening on **23 May 2024** at **Livourne 32**.

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The paintings of Matt Hansel traverse a liminal terrain located between the morbidly beautiful and the gruesomely delightful. Employing a menagerie of art historical tropes ranging from 16th Century European painting to American modernism, Hansel meticulously constructs surreal tableaux that contort the very logics of dreamscape. Working through compositional strategies rooted in religious iconography, Flemish still life and vanitas painting, Hansel obfuscates the distinction between past and present as a means to reinterpret the visual cacophony of our fleeting contemporary moment.

Matt Hansel's distinct painterly vocabulary becomes perpetually reconfigured in his highly detailed works. In the worlds Hansel constructs, there is a particular focus on the organizational strategies between micro and macrocosm. This shift in scale offers a breadth of illusionary depth which transcends the painterly surface to reveal discrete miniature worlds. As seen in such iconic works as Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, where vast scenes of activity provide and overall compositional landscape, the beauty as well as the devil is in the details. Employing similar strategies to the Flemish master, Hansel's complex worlds are built out of a play of religious allegory, the imagined sites of the erotic, intermixed with 20th century visual culture. In these paintings the figure is caught in physical dialogue with a bizarre bestiary of the artist's imagined demonology. Often citing Christian creation stories of the original sin, Hansel's subjects find themselves in various states dress when confronting the ludicrous amalgamated bodies of demons. Situated in pastoral arenas of gardens, seascapes and beaches, these figures seem blissfully unaware of the macabre worlds creeping into the frame or just below the surface, which on closer inspection is the grounding layer for Hansel's universe rendered in high definition. In setting up such visual dichotomies, the artist confronts the viewer with questions of existential morality, which permeate every corner of his fantastical images. By pitting heaven and hell against each other in this way, the artist engages in a horrifically exquisite dance where earthly delights are intertwined with the opulent glut of consumer commodity, propped up by equally foreboding underworlds.

As an artist who came of age during the transition of images from analogue to digital, the paintings of Matt Hansel are caught in a perpetually shifting present. By tethering diverging cultural epochs together, the artist reflects on the transitional flux of our visual landscapes: from eye, to lens,

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to screen, and back again, weaving polarities into lush painterly tapestries that only truly reveal themselves in time spent in the act of looking. Hansel holds together the seemingly beautiful with the seemingly ugly, insinuating that one can only exist in relation to the other, while claiming no moral distinction between them. As is depicted in these works, the surreal moment occurs when binary worlds collide. Within this collision a new balance is defined, resonate of the ancient equilibrium as above, so below.

— Alex Turgeon

About the artist

(BORN) 1977, FRONT ROYAL, VA USA

(BASED) BROOKLYN, NY USA

Matthew Hansel had solo presentations at The Hole, New York, NY USA; PM/AM, London, UK; Waserman Projects, Detroit, MI USA; Yuka Contemporary, Tokyo, Japan, among others. Group presentations include the Hive Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China; Rolando Anselmi, Rome, Italy; Nino Mier Gallery, New York, NY USA; Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel; Lee Eugene Gallery, Seoul, Korea; Galerie Droste, Düsseldorf, Germany; Joshua Liner Gallery, New York, NY USA; Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York, NY USA; Gagosian Gallery, Athens, Greece.

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