

Meliksetian MB Briggs

Closer to Illusion

Curated by Luana Hildebrandt

April 5 - May 11, 2024

Opening Reception:

Friday, April 5th 6:30-9pm



Meliksetian | Briggs is pleased to present *Closer to Illusion*, a group exhibition organized by Los Angeles writer and curator Luana Hildebrandt, featuring works by Bas Jan Ader, Yifan Jiang, Christiane Lyons, Ben Wolf Noam, Joe Reihsen, Aura Rosenberg, Adam Saks, and Areum Yang. On view from April 5th through May 11th, 2024, at the gallery's location at 150 Manufacturing Street, Dallas, the exhibition brings together painting, sculpture and works on paper from a diverse group of artists that explore the universal nature of human experience and contemplate on the nuanced interplay between illusion and reality.

The works in the exhibition serve as portals into the human psyche, revealing our innate proclivity to construct narratives in response to life's labyrinthine complexities. Whether seeking solace amidst nature's bountiful embrace, or finding refuge within the architectural sanctuaries of our own creation, the emotional landscapes depicted in these pieces bear witness to our capacity to transmute the ordinary into the extraordinary.

The exhibition *Closer to Illusion* serves as a catalyst for contemplation, inviting viewers to reflect on the profound role of fantasy in our daily lives—a beacon of resilience amidst the tempestuous seas of reality. Through the discerning eyes of the artists included in the show, the delicate dance between the natural and the fabricated unfolds, mirroring our collective odyssey and offering comfort in the profound reflections and poignant questions posed by art's timeless allure.

Bas Jan Ader was a Dutch American conceptual artist, who is considered today one of the most significant and influential artists of his generation. His practice evokes with poetic melancholy the fleeting beauty of human condition and the quest for meaning in the face of uncertainty. His iconic work, "In Search of the Miraculous," involved his solo voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in a small sailing boat, a journey that ultimately ended in his disappearance at sea in 1975. This tragic event has since become inseparable from Ader's artistic legacy, imbuing his work with a haunting poignancy. Beyond his iconic voyage, Ader's early works, including paintings, drawings, prints and collages trace his evolution from Modernist influences to his pioneering embrace of conceptual art in the late 1960s. With minimalist gestures and subtle interventions, Ader created playful illusions between the external world and the inner realm of the psyche. His creative trajectory challenged the conventions of his time, inspiring generations of artists and sealing his status as a seminal figure in contemporary art history.

Yifan Jiang is an emerging Chinese Canadian artist based in New York City. Her thought-provoking ethereal compositions, ranging from painting, to sculpture and animation, transport us to a realm where dreams and reality intertwine, inviting us to journey into surreal landscapes of the mind and explore the depths of our subconscious. With her masterful craftsmanship, Jiang navigates the delicate balance between light and shadow with each brushstroke, unravelling the transformative power of illusion in the mysteries hidden within the recesses of our collective consciousness.

Christiane Lyons lives and works in San Francisco. Her practice is marked by a profound exploration of painting processes and the appropriation of imagery to challenge existing meanings and perceptions. Drawing inspiration from artists like Pablo Picasso and Hans Bellmer, who manipulated and reconstructed the female body, Lyon brings in a distinctively feminine perspective, shows women's objectification throughout art history and culture while at the same time, attempts to break this cycle by imbuing the figures with subjectivity. This distortion manifests by using found images of multiple women's bodies to create one figure in each painting. She appropriates from image searches, culling material from social media to fashion photography, because she believes these representations of women have a universal influence on women worldwide, from all cultures and of all ages. Through this, Lyon metaphorically addresses the contemporary woman's struggle within a culture fixated on appearances and an unattainable illusion of perfection.

Ben Wolf Noam lives and works in Los Angeles and New York. His whimsical paintings and sculptures challenge our perceptions of space and time, inviting

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us to question the boundaries that define our reality. Noam interprets the classical genre of landscape painting through a surrealist collapse of time and space, material and illusionism, with a nod towards contemporary sensory experience. Noam's interpretation of mushrooms goes beyond mere replication; he infuses them with a sense of magic that breathes life into the sculptural through his tableau of colors. Their organic shapes evoke a connection to the natural world, while the color palette hints at the mysteries and illusions they can play of the human mind.

Joe Reihsen lives and works in Los Angeles. His paintings are enigmatic abstractions that beckon viewers into a world where textures, shapes and colors converge, capturing collisions between surface and the layers beneath. Reihsen's canvases combine motion with a heavy stillness, inviting contemplation on the fluidity of perception and the transformative power of abstract expression. In his most recent works, Reihsen uses water-based pigments to embed the physical properties of nature into the surface of the canvas, allowing the water to splash and pool according to the forces of gravity and the tension between liquid and fiber. The sheer deposits of color form a topography of islands, fault lines and other abstracted landmasses for the artist to either follow or traverse with his brush. Reihsen's creative methods push the boundaries of surface, color, and the malleability of paint as a medium, balancing harmonious shapes and color compositions with a subtle tension that epitomizes the intriguing interplay of optics and illusion.

Aura Rosenberg lives and works in New York City and Berlin. Her painting explores desire, intimacy, and the commodification of sexuality in contemporary culture. Through imagery drawn from the world of pornography, Rosenberg challenges taboos and confronts viewers with a vision of human sexuality that is both raw and highly mediated. By recontextualizing pornographic imagery within the sphere of fine art, her work reminds us that eroticism has historically always been an essential element of art. By delving into the complexities of desire, her work invites us to examine our deepest fears and desires, our preconceptions and prejudices through illusions. It reminds us of the complex truths that often lurk beneath the surface of our sexual identities.

Adam Saks is a Danish artist who lives and works in Berlin. Known for his captivating explorations of existentialism, Saks employs a unique blend of visual symbolism and surrealism in his works. Through his intricate brushwork and evocative imagery, he engages viewers in thought-provoking introspection and contemplation on the intricate

interplay between illusion and reality. Saks creates a structure of metaphors through figurative elements with his own compositional system. A painting process with various approaches to applying colors, in which elements are organically placed on canvas, some levitating and creating their own order in nature, others geometrically shaped through lyrical abstraction.

Areum Yang is an emerging artist born in South Korea who lives and works in New York City. Deftly rendered with a mixture of raw and painterly gestures, Yang's vivid, introspective portraits exist within anthropomorphic landscapes or surreal interiors. She visualized her emotional state through paintings, combining dry and wet materials to create expressionistic compositions. Figures, coarsely rendered in pencil or charcoal, contrast with backdrops painted with colorful, improvisational mark-making. Yet, at moments, the boundaries are blurred, and subject and atmosphere become one. "I am trying to structure experience without pinpointing," writes Yang. As such, there is an ambiguity in her compositions, which allows them to function as both representations of her inner life and more universal storytelling.

Luana Hildebrandt is an American curator and writer renowned for her dedication towards identifying, supporting and championing emerging talent, a commitment that has been pivotal to the success of many established and blue-chip artists today. With a career spanning over a decade, she has made significant contributions to the contemporary art world through her diverse curatorial projects and insightful writing. During her tenure as director of Nicodim Gallery Los Angeles, since its inception and spanning over a decade, she curated groundbreaking exhibitions spotlighting emerging talents who have since gained acclaim in the art world, such as Shio Kusaka, Oscar Murillo, Adrian Ghenie and Serban Savu who is representing Romania at the Venice Biennale in 2024. Notably, as an independent curator and advisor, she introduced European artists like Caroline Walker and Jessie Makinson to the Los Angeles collectors and galleries. She co-founded Hildebrandt Studio in 2012, the first design-art gallery in Los Angeles, featuring post-war California Modern pottery including the iconic ceramics of David Cressey. Her LH Art Advisory firm based in Los Angeles and Bucharest specializes in building contemporary art collections for private and public clients, offering professional guidance to artists and galleries across US and Europe, spearheading curatorial projects and enriching the discourse on contemporary art through writing for international art and design publications.

Text by Luana Hildebrandt.