

FRIEDRICH KUNATH

New Ballads

29 April - 5 June 2021



Tim Van Laere Gallery is pleased to present its second solo exhibition of Friedrich Kunath, titled *New Ballads*.

The universe of Friedrich Kunath is carefully balanced around dichotomies. His paintings address the greater questions in life, bringing viewers into a disruptive state of searching for meaning in life while realizing the ridiculousness of this quest. The artist's personal journey from East to West Berlin and on to his new-found home in Los Angeles presented him with a wide variety of source material ranging from the canon of art history and German philosophy to the idiom of kitsch and the make-believe world of Hollywood and LA. Many of these materials are impacted by two poles – the culture of wisdom and pop culture – to the point of obsession and even, at times, systematization. Dealing with such universal themes of human existence as love, loss, optimism, vulnerability and melancholy, he employs a variety of media, from painting, sculpture, drawing, video and photography to expansive installations, all provided with a tragicomic pathos and dreams of possibilities. In almost every work, there is a tangible realization that the world is a spectacle of unfulfilled dreams in which the rawness of life is fled through the parallel universe of pop culture.

Humbled by the current global pandemic, Kunath has dialled back his signature irony and presents a series of more subtle works in which he shares his inner thoughts and travels with his viewers. The centrepiece of this show, titled *One Minute You're Here*, works as an anchor around which the other paintings orbit like a satellite system. The work reveals several of the artist's passions, such as perfume, tennis and music – the title itself refers to the Bruce Springsteen song of the same name. The main actor in this piece, as Kunath likes to call his characters, is the Nick Drake figure who drags a bag of unspecified sadness out of his house and into the night. This figure reappears in the work *Unspecified Sadness*, where, in the spirit of Casper David Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, you see the figure from the back, carrying the bag into this comical cartoonish forest. According to Kunath, Casper David Friedrich's figure from the back was revolutionary in the painting of inner landscapes. 'Putting a figure in front of you, you looking through that figure to the landscape, therefore you are looking at your own inner landscape', says Kunath. '*One Minute You're Here* is interesting because in America you would say: One minute you're here and the next you're gone. And I think that leaving out the second sentence is basically my approach of painting, as I believe that painting starts where words end. When language ends, painting starts. And I feel like I was thinking of that a lot with *One Minute You're Here*. In your mind you might hear 'the next you're gone', but you don't see it. The painting steps in for the rest of the sentence. I feel that the way I've worked with words for this show is a bit more nuanced. It's not as loud, nor does it go straight for the one-liner.'

Friedrich Kunath was born in Chemnitz, Germany (1974). He lives and works in Los Angeles. His work has been exhibited widely and is featured in prominent public and private collections, such as Museum of Modern Art, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, the Netherlands.