

Guy Yanai
The Caboose
15 May – 26 June, 2021

Praz-Delavallade is pleased to present The Caboose, an exhibition of new paintings by Guy Yanai. This will be his second solo exhibition at the gallery in Los Angeles which will open on 15 May and run through 26 June.

For weeks, maybe months I have been looking at this group of paintings. Looking and trying to see what it is that binds them together. Instinctively they were painted as a group, as a thematic project, all just for this show. But yet again, the strange lack of coherency was strange (it's funny how often this same strangeness surprises me as new when it occurs every few months).

Then this tiny piece of text I found articulated the sensation and echoed perfectly what I couldn't put a name to. The text is one paragraph from Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, a sort of autobiography. He speaks about this white streetcar of his youth that ran between Bayonne (his native village) and Biarritz. In the summers, they would attach an open air car to it. This trip, with the empty countryside, the fresh air comes up in his thoughts about his childhood.

He continues: "Today neither the streetcar nor the caboose exists, and the trip from Biarritz is anything but a pleasure. This is not to apply a mythic embellishment to the past, or to express regrets for a lost youth by pretending to regret a streetcar. This is to say the art of living has no history: it does not evolve: the pleasure which vanishes vanishes for good, there is no substitute for it."

A few of these paintings are sourced from the films of Eric Rohmer. These little moments, that Rohmer creates fuse story, psychology, and human relations into the perfect visuals. These sparse pleasures; Reading a book outside, walking by the sea with a friend or lover, riding a bicycle looking for someone. These are the precise things that are almost extinct now from our world. To reiterate Barthe, I am not nostalgic in any way, since most of these things I haven't even experienced, but they touch a profound place of emotion for me. The scene from Bompard, where Aurore and I have our Marseille home, the image of the Dolomites, taken from an Instagram story from the house of the Cy Twombly family there, the lone plant of Ryder, my assistant in Marseille, the beautiful girl in shadow. All of these do touch a pleasure that has vanished.

Barthes concludes: "Other pleasures come, which replace nothing. No progress in pleasures, nothing but mutations."

–Guy Yanai