

KÖNIG GALERIE

GUY YANAI IN THE SHADOW OF YOUNG GIRLS IN FLOWER


25 MAY – 18 JUNE 2022
ST. AGNES | CHAPEL


KÖNIG GALERIE presents its first solo exhibition of Guy Yanai, *IN THE SHADOW OF YOUNG GIRLS IN FLOWER*, in the Chapel in Berlin. Yanai is a painter who reimagines the world of digital imagery in flat, rectangular patches of bright colour, suffused with an intoxicating, radiant light. For his debut show in Berlin, Yanai has created two new bodies of oil on canvas works, 15 in total – landscapes and intimate portraits of female characters – the latter of which represents uncharted territory for the Israeli-born artist, who has made a name for himself with his vibrant plant still lifes, candescent interiors, and scenes recreated from beloved films.

Yanai splits his time between his native Israel and his adopted home in the south of France, and his new group of paintings reflect the austral light and warmth of these climates. His technique of applying small units of oil colour to his canvases gives the impression of a flattened world, equivalent both to the digital screen and the two-dimensional support of the stretched painting. The effects are anything but two-dimensional, however, oozing with desire and sentience, and the freedom that Yanai has allowed himself to paint entirely new subjects while confined to his home in the last two years. The radical uniformity of his gestures means that each element, scene, person, or object that Yanai paints is treated with the same intensity and attention to detail, regardless of whether it is a shadow, a strand of hair, or a face – background and foreground remain on equal footing. Yanai himself admits as much: “I can make anything mine.”

There is a sense that Yanai is trying to hold tight to the fleeting world of images around him, developing a system of marks to bring the ephemeral qualities of light and colour into some compositional order. The “alchemy”, as Yanai is fond of calling it, lies in his ability to translate the blinding effects of the external realm into his unique handling of paint, a mystery that is right there before the eyes, for anyone to see. The pictures never feature deep perspective, sleight of hand, or anything illusory at all, which means that Yanai is also a gifted student of painting, an artist who brings something entirely new to the medium without trying to reverse its most significant developments. While influenced by earlier figures like Cy Twombly and Robert Rauschenberg, Yanai infuses his works with a levity and exuberance all his own, which is especially apparent in his latest pictures.

The title of this exhibition, *IN THE SHADOW OF YOUNG GIRLS IN FLOWER*, takes its name from the second volume of Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–27), a book that holds special meaning for the artist, and for which Proust was awarded the prestigious Prix de Goncourt for literature exactly one hundred years before Yanai embarked on his most recent series. In his title piece for the show, *IN THE SHADOW OF A YOUNG GIRL IN FLOWER* (2021/2), a woman stands undressed before a cerulean backdrop that could be either an ocean or a sky. At once abstract and figurative, the close-up face is covered in windswept locks, each made of Yanai’s trademark blocks of unified colour, where dark shadows are given their own black spaces amid the amber hues of hair and skin. This treatment of the face represents an entirely new mode of portraiture for the artist, who had previously captured his subjects at a certain remove, like the deep focus of a film camera. In two landscape works that depart from the artist’s earlier seascapes and sailboat pictures, *DORSET* and *SCOTLAND, HOUSES WITH NO WINDOWS* (both 2022), Yanai creates scenes of places that he has never visited. Both works are built vertically, each painting featuring a large pink swath at their base, pulling eyes upwards toward a haze of shimmering surfaces that push outward rather than inward. Surface is key, a condition that painting shares with its digital counterparts, but unlike the camera’s illusion of space, we return again and again to those alchemical strokes of Yanai’s palette knife and brush.

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Penumbra
KÖNIG GALERIE | NAVE
17.06 – 07.08.2022

AYAKO ROKKAKU
Imagination for Flying Adventure
KÖNIG LONDON
13.05 – 11.06.2022

CLAUDIA COMTE
An Impending Disaster (HAHAHA)
KÖNIG GALERIE IM KHK
27.04. – 22.06.2022

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Opening Hours
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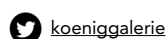
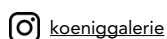
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Yanai manages to productively incorporate the contemporary status of the ubiquitous digital image in his works, not by copying or mimicking its styles, but by using the corresponding logic that exists between the digital and the painterly: sheen, intimacy, and flatness above all. These are values that Yanai pulls from the image world and converts into the specific language of painting. Unlike the codes of the smartphone photo that are hidden from view, Yanai opens his paintings, allowing us to witness how each work is constructed in small, rectangular blocks, hovering in the real space between the specific application of paint and the finished picture. We witness emancipation and longing in the artist's newfound subjects, temporally fixated on the smouldering present. It is indeed an alchemy, not of gold or precious metals, but of the everyday, endlessly enigmatic and captivating.

Guy Yanai (b. 1977, Haifa) lives and works between Tel Aviv and Marseille. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Hampshire College (Massachusetts, USA), and studied art at Parsons School of Design, New York; and Pont-Aven School of Art, Pont-Aven, France.

Recent selected solo exhibitions took place at Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa (2015), and his work has been included in exhibitions in numerous institutions such as Asia Art Center, Shanghai (2021); Nassima/Landau Foundation, Tel Aviv (2020); The Velan Center for Contemporary Art, Turin (2013); and The Ashdod Museum of Art, Ashdod (2008). Yanai's upcoming institutional group exhibitions include Kunsthal Rotterdam (2022) and Yvon Lambert Collection, Avignon (2023).

Yanai's work is included in numerous public and private collections throughout the USA, Europe, and Asia, such as the Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv; Xiao Museum, Rhizao; Rema Hort Mann Foundation, New York; Jose Mugarbi Collection, Israel; Discount Bank and M Art Center, Shanghai; University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas; Drake Collection, Wassenaar; and the Anita Zabłudowicz Collection, London, among others.



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