

HERNAN BAS
The Conceptualists: Vol. II

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Hernan Bas, *Conceptual artist #19 (A child of the 80's, he places his Polaroid self portraits in a familiar spot whenever he's feeling lost)*, 2023. Photo by Silvia Ros

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Lehmann Maupin presents *The Conceptualists: Vol. II*, an exhibition of new work by Hernan Bas. Marking the artist's sixth solo presentation with the gallery, the exhibition is a continuation of Bas's *Conceptualists* series started in 2021.

Bas is best known for his narratively rich scenes that feature a wide-range of references spanning art and literature, popular culture, kitsch, the occult, religion, and mythology. Across his works, Bas seeks to defamiliarize everyday experience through humor, revealing the surreal and absurd lurking beneath the mundane. In the *Conceptualists* series, Bas marries his personal appreciation of conceptual artists with his ongoing exploration of eccentricity. Whereas a number of prior works by the artist depict figures known as "enthusiasts" engaged in esoteric habits, this body of work reimagines absurdity and obsession as foundations of artistic practice.

Each work in Bas's *Conceptualists* series depicts a fictive conceptual artist enraptured by his eccentric creative pursuits. In *Conceptual artist #22 (The sole source for his prized homemade pulp paper is vintage Pulp Fiction)*, Bas envisions an artist who makes paper from Harlequin romance novels (turning one form of pulp into another), while in *Conceptual artist #18 (Spirited by a passion for urban legends, he fabricates roadside memorials from which to hitchhike from)*, Bas imagines a performance-based artist who erects fake road-side memorials and hitch-hikes from one to another.

At the heart of the series lies a productive tension between conceptual and representational forms of artmaking. Whereas Bas's fictive artists create thoroughly idea-based, propositional works that perhaps can be expressed by their titles alone, Bas's own paintings remain invested in the art object and reward close looking. And while he depicts artists engaged in fervently conceptual practices, Bas's compositions summon a wide range of art historical references that lurk in collective consciousness and popular imagination. *Conceptual artist #17 (With the aid of scissors, paper doilies and origami he elevates lily ponds to attract potential princes)* might call to mind Claude Monet's waterlilies, while *Conceptual artist #16 (Performance based; the founder and reigning champion of a weekly pillow fight tournament)* evokes American Realist painter George Bellows's canonical boxing scenes. In the latter, Bas undermines this traditional theater of masculinity, and in the place of a boxing match he depicts two male figures engaged in a pillow fight. A space of intimacy becomes a sporting arena; in lieu of a boxing ring, Bas depicts a mattress and bedframe lined with red ribbon bows. Indeed, Bas's practice is characterized by the frequent convergence of the private and public realms, and he often reformulates masculine tropes repeated throughout art history to give way to queer interpretations.

Throughout *The Conceptualists*, art haunts everyday existence. *Conceptual artist #19 (A child of the 80's, he places his Polaroid self portraits in a familiar spot whenever he's feeling lost)*, contains a number of subtle references to Andy Warhol. The many milk cartons—which Bas has silkscreened onto the canvas—recall Warhol's silkscreens of mass-produced goods (such as soup cans and soda bottles), while the Polaroid camera in the subject's hands evokes his iconic Polaroid images. Perhaps the work's most emphatic homage can be seen in the figure's socks, where a pattern of skulls references Warhol's early *Death and Disaster* series. Here and across this larger body of work, Bas's sensitivity to art history results not in an insular investigation of artmaking, but rather in an expansive consideration of art's capacity to permeate the collective cultural imagination.



Hernan Bas, *Conceptual artist #19 (A child of the 80's, he places his Polaroid self portraits in a familiar spot whenever he's feeling lost)*, 2023 (detail). Photo by Silvia Ros

Hernan Bas (b. 1978, Miami, FL, lives and works in Detroit, MI and Miami, FL) Bas received a degree from the New World School of the Arts, Miami, FL, in 1996. Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized by Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China (2021); Space K, Seoul, South Korea (2021); Rubell Museum, Miami, FL (2020); Centro De Arte Contemporáneo Málaga, Málaga, Spain (2018); Colby College Art Museum, Waterville, ME (2018); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2017); Bass Museum of Art, Miami, FL (2013); and Kunstverein Hannover, Hannover, Germany (2012).

Bas has participated in a number of group exhibitions, including *What's Going On*, Rubell Museum, Washington, D.C. (2022); *Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami's Collection*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL (2022); *Collection Focus: Our Beginnings Never Know Our Ends*, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL (2021); *Eternal Forest*, Paradise Art Space, Incheon, South Korea (2020); *Where is the Madness You Promised Me: Dystopian Paintings from the Marc & Livia Straus Collection*, Hudson Valley Museum of Contemporary Art, Peekskill, NY (2019); *Generation Loss*, Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf, Germany (2017); *On the Horizon: Contemporary Cuban Art from the Jorge M. Pérez Collection*, Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL (2017); *Tracing Shadows*, PLATEAU, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea (2015); *On Painting*, Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain (2013); *Contemporary Magic: A Tarot Deck Art Project*, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA (2011); *The Collectors*, curated by Elmgreen & Dragset for the Nordic and Danish Pavilions at the 53rd Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2009); *Triumph of Painting: Part III*, Saatchi Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2005); *Ideal Worlds – New Romanticism in Contemporary Art*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany (2005); and the Whitney Biennial, New York, NY (2004).

Bas' work is in the permanent collections of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Carré d'Art - Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes, France; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; Saatchi Collection, London, United Kingdom; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), San Francisco, CA; Space K, Seoul, South Korea; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.



Portrait of Hernan Bas in his Miami studio, 2017

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity, and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.



Lehmann Maupin in New York. Photo by Matthew Herrmann