

# Anton Kern Gallery

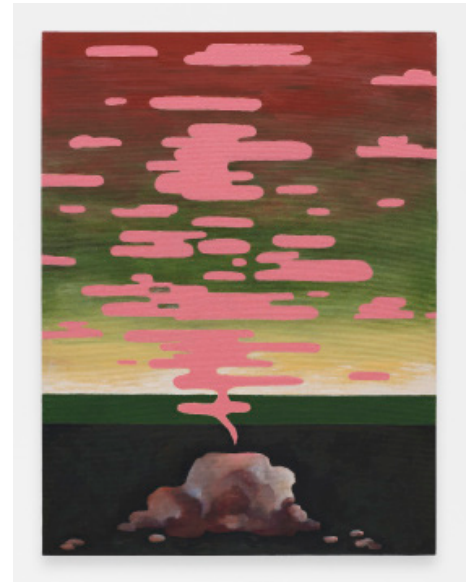
## Leo Mock: *Blocking your sun*

January 11 – February 17, 2024

For his first exhibition at Anton Kern Gallery, *Blocking your sun*, Leo Mock presents 16 oil paintings made over the last year, to be shown on the gallery's third floor. The exhibition will include eight paintings from the artist's "pie face" series, in which the familiar features of a cloudy sky become the site of an eerie farce, in addition to eight more similarly formatted, otherworldly landscapes.

In Mock's paintings, the natural world is alien—unmistakably different from our own, despite sharing features such as horizon lines, rocky ground, and light-filled skies. The building blocks of each landscape are taken from our Earth, but are rearranged and reconfigured to make something altogether new. Reds and greens hail from above. Bubble gum pink clouds hurtle across the picture plane. The same land formations reach upwards and towards the top of the canvas. Looming deep red figures get creamed by continuously moving clouds, for a total of eight times.

Rendered in an equally muddy and bright palette, the artist's ominous atmospheres nod to predecessors like Yves Tanguy, specifically his low horizon lines, and the agoraphobic, deserted landscapes of Giorgio de Chirico. Mock's kinetic cartoons evoke Mutt and Jeff and George Herriman's Krazy Kat. Perhaps most importantly, Mock looks to the Irish writer Samuel Beckett, whose resistance to fascism, darkly comic sensibility, and deep sympathy for the human condition provide inspiration.



Leo Mock, *A search that shall remain*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 39 1/2 x 29 1/2 inches

In his experimental war-time novel *Watt*, Beckett writes of the generational suffering of his protagonist:

*And the poor old lousy old earth, my earth and my father's and my mother's and my father's father's and my mother's mother's and my father's mother's and my mother's father's and my father's mother's father's and my mother's father's mother's and my father's mother's mother's and my mother's father's father's and my father's father's mother's and my mother's mother's father's and my father's father's father's and my mother's mother's mother's...*

Just so, in the pie face series, Mock's titular character is repeatedly hit in the face with a pie—a slapstick routine that becomes all too human when acted out again, and again, and again. In homage to Beckett's novel, Mock has made a pie painting for each of the seven generations who preceded Watt, and one for poor Watt himself. The viewer is prompted to wonder: are these pies a metaphor for the obscured truths and indignities of life in contemporary America? Or are they just whipped cream pies in the face? Perhaps they exist as a little bit of both.

Leo Mock (b. 1964, Los Angeles, CA) graduated from ArtCenter College of Design in Pasadena, California. He has exhibited at China Art Objects, M+B, and Galerie Guido W. Baudach, among others. Recent press includes *The New York Times*, *Art Review*, and *artillery magazine*. Mock lives and works in Mexico City, Mexico.

In 2020, *The New York Times* article, "Artist-Run Galleries Defy the Mega-Dealer Trend in Los Angeles," revealed what had previously been an unspoken secret: Leo Mock is an alias—the artist's given name is Steve Hanson. Leo was his uncle's name; Mock, his mother's maiden name. As Hanson, he is the co-founder and director of China Art Objects, a gallery launched in the late 1990s by artists for artists, showing work by: Katherine Bernhardt, Sean Landers, Isa Genzken, Walead Beshty, Ruby Neri, Pae White, to name just a few. In 2019, Hanson relocated to Mexico. Since then, he has been making paintings and showing them under his chosen moniker.