

# FRIEDRICH KUNATH

## Vitello Kunatho

9 May - 4 July 2026

Tim Van Laere Gallery is pleased to present *Vitello Kunatho*, Friedrich Kunath's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery since joining the gallery in 2016, and his first in our Roman space. For this occasion, Kunath unveils a new body of paintings that continues his quiet excavation of emotional ambiguity, cultural hybridity, and the subtle absurdities that shape contemporary life.

Working across painting, sculpture, installation, and text, Kunath has long described himself as a "composer of images." His works unfold like songs - layered, associative, and drifting between registers - where German Romanticism brushes against American pop culture, British subculture, and fragments of music and memory surface and dissolve. In *Vitello Kunatho*, this sensibility takes form in landscapes that feel at once intimate and estranged, where irony and sincerity are held in delicate suspension, and humor flickers gently through melancholy.

In paintings such as *And The Sad Truth is That I'm Happy* and *It's Just A Silly Phase I'm Going Through*, language lingers like an afterthought or a refrain. Words do not explain; they echo. They hover as emotional residue - at once confessional and elusive, familiar yet ungraspable. In *You Won't Know If You Don't Go (Romantic Times)*, a quiet restlessness emerges, tracing the fragile space between longing and hesitation. Even the exhibition's title, *Vitello Kunatho*, carries a sense of slippage - a phrase that feels remembered and invented at once - mirroring Kunath's enduring fascination with displacement, translation, humor and transformation. In works such as *Love is Free - Give It Away*, sincerity is offered openly, only to be gently unsettled, revealing how closely authenticity and cliché can resemble one another.

Kunath's process unfolds in layers, both material and psychological. He begins with dense, impasto surfaces: fields of paint that hold a kind of tactile memory. Into these, he inscribes fleeting traces: drawings, notes, Italian words, fragments of song, lists, numbers - passing thoughts caught before they vanish. These markings, intimate and unguarded, form a submerged language beneath the visible image. Once sealed, an image taken from our collective vernacular is painted over them, partially concealing what came before. The viewer, moving slowly, may sense these hidden strata - like echoes beneath a surface - inviting a more inward, reflective mode of looking. His compositions are built on quiet dissonance: idyllic horizons interrupted by text, cartoon-like figures adrift in emotionally charged terrains, motifs that seem to migrate from one work to another as if guided by their own logic. These juxtapositions do not resolve; they resonate. They mirror a world in which meaning is never fixed, but constantly assembled and undone. Kunath's works become visual poems: melancholic, wry, and softly discordant - where contradiction is not a problem to solve, but a condition to inhabit.

Presented in Rome, a city shaped by dense cultural and historical layers, the exhibition acquires an added dimension. Kunath's work enters into a subtle dialogue with its surroundings, situating his contemporary visual language within a broader art historical continuum. The title, *Vitello Kunatho*, hints at Kunath's personal affinity with Italy and signals a shift in the artist's practice. The sense of longing that once informed his move from Germany to Los Angeles has gradually reoriented toward Italy, shaped by an increasing engagement with Italian music and cinema over the past six to seven years. Kunath's recent works suggest a transitional space in which Los Angeles remains present, yet begins to recede, like a landscape in the rear-view mirror, as his focus turns toward a different cultural horizon.

Friedrich Kunath was born in Chemnitz, Germany, in 1974, and lives and works in Los Angeles. His work has been exhibited internationally and is held in numerous public and private collections, including CAC Málaga; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; the François Pinault Collection, Paris; Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussels; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, among others.