

Jānis Avotiņš

Since the Foundation

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Ibid is delighted to announce a new solo show by Latvian artist Jānis Avotiņš (b. 1981) entitled *Since the Foundation*.

The work of Jānis Avotiņš is sourced from 1950's Soviet propaganda films, post-World War II national picture books, and photographic documentation of poets, artists and intellectuals during the Soviet-era. His paintings awaken a familiar signifier in the collective memory, while neutralizing emotion through the articulation of what lay in the absent or invisible part of the canvas, suggesting, or in certain cases, tracing, a void. The subjects themselves are a contradiction, for although they are not formally responsible for crimes committed during communism, they nonetheless served as "model Soviet citizens," photographed for the purposes of propaganda. Avotiņš selects loud or aggressive images—demonstrated by the dynamic solemnity they project—as these compositional qualities have long-been regarded as Communist graphic tools intended to inspire the public and galvanize nationalism.

Central to Avotiņš technique is the way paint is applied in thin washes of pale, bleached colour overlaid with small alternating brushstrokes. Isolated forms and figures emerge through omission. Whilst some of the artist's scenes mime Soviet-era photographs, others recall the contemporary appearance of his hometown. Many scenes seem to be part or wholly imagined, dream-like visions of the past, or slowly reconstructed personal memories of friends, places, events and situations.

The body of work in *Since the Foundation* has a more expressive and stirring quality, something which was not predominate in the past work. Beyond the historical atmosphere present in his work, there is a longing under the conditions of the decline of western culture for a general desire of beauty and hope and the rituals leading to it. Each work is articulated in a way that is both ineffable and timeless, although rooted in reality.

Jānis Avotiņš lives and works in Riga, Latvia. He received his BA and MA at the Latvian Academy of Art. He will have a solo show at the Latvian National Museum of Art in 2016. Recent shows include *Only here*, The Federal Republic of Germany's Contemporary Art Collection, Bonn, DE; *Gaiety is the most outstanding feature of the Soviet Union*, Saatchi gallery, London, UK and *After the Fall*, Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, NY, US.

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