

TIM VAN LAERE GALLERY

FRIEDRICH KUNATH

Where is the Madness that You Promised Me

17 May – 23 June 2018

Tim Van Laere Gallery is pleased to present its first solo exhibition of Friedrich Kunath, titled *Where is the Madness that You Promised Me*.

Friedrich Kunath's work is permeated with ambiguity. His personal journey from East to West Berlin, towards his new-found home in Los Angeles presented Kunath with a wide variety of source material ranging from the canon of art history and German philosophy to the idiom of kitsch and the make-believe world of Hollywood and LA. Many of which are impacted by two poles—the culture of wisdom and popular culture—to the point of obsession and even, at times, systematization. Dealing with the universal themes of human existence, such as love, loss, optimism, vulnerability and melancholy, he serves a variety of media, ranging from painting, sculpture, drawing, video and photography, to expansive installations, all provided with a tragicomic pathos and dreams of possibilities. In almost every work, the realization is tangible that the world is a spectacle of unfulfilled dreams, in which the rawness of life is fled through the parallel universe of popular culture.

His new paintings are an integration of his own unconsciousness and the overlapping awareness of himself and the world. They begin with a complete reset of intent, open to automatism and collections of banal everyday looping thoughts, what Friedrich Kunath refers to as “pictorial Tourette's”. He presents a variety of drawing styles which are layered onto colorful watercolor washes or thick layers of colorful paint, often accompanied by handwritten texts, cartoons and reoccurring motifs. His images move freely between abstraction and representation, consist of washed-out colors that are overlaid with various visual references, from satirical comics, doodles, to text passages with nuanced puns and thus strike a balance between irony and despair. In Kunath's painterly universe we can find the saint Hieronymous wearing Allstars, a choir of bananas serenading to a landscape which reminds us of German romanticism and a variety of sunsets and rainbows. Irony and melancholy melt together in a cheerful vocabulary, with a new glorious sunset on the horizon.

Friedrich Kunath makes use of the grotesque and exaggerations in his works without clinging to superficial humor. The images and scenes portrayed as sculptures, paintings, or detailed drawings and caricatures are not harmless jokes, but rather ambiguous metaphors for the present. He encounters the question regarding self-positioning in the framework of various cultural influences with knowing irony. His pieces undercut ingrained pictorial traditions and conventions and link seemingly incompatible approaches such as humor and melancholy, narration and abstraction or fiction and reality.

Friedrich Kunath was born in Chemnitz, Germany (1974) and lives and works in Los Angeles. His work has been exhibited widely and is featured in prominent public and private collections such as the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN.