

SIMON MARTIN

13 images par seconde

September 01 – October 14, 2023

Opening: Saturday Sep 02, 5 - 8 pm

Rämistrasse 33, 8001 Zurich

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to present the first solo exhibition in Switzerland of a new series of paintings by French artist Simon Martin (born 1992 in Vitry-sur-Seine, France; lives and works in Paris, France). His work was already featured in 2022 as part of the group exhibition **"Everything I Do Has an Underlying Political Question"** at Galerie Peter Kilchmann at Rämistrasse.

We approach Simon Martin's painting with the gaze of half-closed eyes - similar to a vision still blurred from sleep that hesitantly grasps familiar spaces. Every sense is mobilized to recognize a world that is familiar to us. In these paradoxical moments of uncertainty, we effortlessly recognize a multitude of lines and shapes, familiar images and soothing smells. However, gaps remain between these fragments of life, which the imagination of painting is able to playfully fill.

"13 images par seconde" includes ten new paintings and an equal number of works on paper, with which the artist initiates a journey through his 'inner cinema'. The figures in his works float between the four rooms of Rämistrasse. Thirteen frames is the number of frames our visual sense can process per second - no more. At the same time, a film is ultimately a sequence of individual images that the human brain perceives as continuity. Between these images we weave the elements together to create a meaningful unity. This experience is not a deception, but rather a co-creation - unconscious, but still active. It thus represents the circumstances for the viewer to grasp this exhibition.

The bodies in Martin's paintings blink in barely perceptible variations of movement. The two figures in **"Figure(s) Penchée(s)"** (Oil and acrylic on canvas, 160 x 97 cm, 2023) are simultaneously in a state of motion, but at different stages. A touch of light that spreads unevenly, illuminating here the ankle, there the knee of a translucent skin, tells of a progression of time between the images. The archaic silhouettes, enveloped in mist, seem to move in sequences as if they were off taken from old filmstrips. Despite a rapid pursuit of vigorous activity that neither the eye nor the brain can fully perceive, the bodies of Martin's painting exude stillness in their commitment to slowness.

Further in the exhibition, the works **"Insomnia"** and **"Endormi"** (Sleeping) (acrylic on canvas / oil and acrylic on canvas, 60 x 120 cm, 2023) reveal a couple facing each other. The first figure is asleep, the other seems to be in a dreamy insomnia due to her movements. You are surrounded by hypnotically empty spaces, devoid of any decor. In these imageless places, our gaze is first questioned, then captured, and finally accesses the narrative. These spaces are not empty, but rather border on areas and places of inquisition. These are spaces that are intended to be experienced by the viewer through whose eyes they become authors themselves. These neutral places ensure the permanence of an image that constantly reinvents itself and thus constantly re-exploits its appeal. Martin creates spaces and surfaces in which the viewer can engulf to continue telling stories about the captured impressions.

In the works **"13 images par seconde I, II and III"** (I, acrylic and watercolor on canvas / II and III, oil on canvas, 50 x 61 cm, 2023) we see some side portraits in which the figures almost turn their backs on us. The tense muscles in their neck suggest that the subject is busy looking beyond the screen at a place that at first seems unreachable but also gives the viewer the opportunity to project.

The theory of mental absorption described by Michael Fried in "Absorption and Theatricality" sheds new light on the characters by Simon Martin. The art critic stretches his view of painting back to the 17th century and sees the phenomenon of devotion to an activity - sometimes even a trivial one - as the origin of modern painting. The figures are absorbed in their activity through their devotion and neutralize the viewer's presence through this activity. They rise to become independent figures and suggest that no one is standing opposite the painting. The freedom to join the present scene rests with the viewer.

The Fayoum portraits, which were wrapped in the mummy wrapping on wooden panels in Egypt, also serve as inspiration for Simon Martin for "**Fayoum I and II**" (acrylique on canvas, 40 x 33 cm, 2023). These funerary portraits originate from the Roman Egyptian time and appear around the 1st century. They were predetermined to be wrapped in the ribbons that covered the mummies' faces. Apparently, the people depicted lived with this portrait during their lifetime. It was to accompany them until their death.

In his new series of works, Martin seeks less melancholy - a common theme in painting - but rather celebrates presence rather than absence with his portraits. They preserve captured moments of intimacy. Through their visual language, the fragments promise an existence in the invisible. However, the faces in Martin's work already elude us, as if entirely in their afterlife. Calm and transparent, Martin's painting unfolds in nuances of dreamy blues and permeable, fluid atmospheres that we can effortlessly absorb and inhabit.

Martin's paintings, which have an inner vitality, invite us to transform his work with our own eyes. He uses and celebrates the time we spend gazing and shares it with us. During the visual exploration of his paintings there are pauses in contemplation. However, Martin efficiently allows the dreamy moments to linger before realism sets in. Therefore, the works on hand are not only his, but also to a certain extent those of the viewer. Rilke once wrote: "Denn des Anschauens, siehe, ist eine Grenze"* ("Behold, there is a limit to gazing") - Martin created his paintings to ensure that this limit does not exist.

Simon Martin studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen in 2016 and graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 2017. In 2017, he was awarded the Prix Portrait Bertrand de Demandolx-Dedons, awarded by the Amis des Beaux-Arts de Paris. In 2019, he took part in the Prix Révélation Émerige and the Prix Antoine Marin, among others. His works have been featured in several exhibitions at the Jousse Entreprise gallery (Paris, France). Recently he participated in the group exhibition "Immortelle: Vitalité de la jeune peinture figurative française" at MO.CO (Montpellier, France), Fondation Pernod Ricard (Paris, France), Musée Arthur Rimbaud (Charleville-Mézières, France) and Participated in the Fab: collection Agnès B. (Paris, France). Since 2021, his work is part of the collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris.

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*Rainer Maria Rilke, Wendung, 1914