

KISSED THEN BURNED

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Gallery
Rue des Amis - 1201 GENEVE

OPEN
Jeudi 16-19
et sur rendez-vous.

My Crack House is Better than Yours

Finn Massie

Solo show

24.01.-30.04.2025

Finn Massie's new paintings are oversaturated with signs and figures. On one canvas, a maelstrom of topsy-turvy wild horses, smiling cartoony dog faces, checkered patterns, chains, cathedral windows, painterly abstract marks, and anthropomorphized animals dressed in medieval garb, all scream for our attention. Foreground and background are indistinguishable, as if each of his motif was shoving the others to get up front. It's impossible to tell whether the work has been painted in the same orientation in which it hangs, and one assumes it might have been up-turned many times during its making. With some parts drawn, briskly outlined, and other painted, saturated with DayGlo and watery pastel hues, it seems like the only thing holding all those disparate elements together is their kinetic energy and speed of execution. .

These paintings dissolve the enmity between two traditionally opposed regimens of modern art making: the improvised and the predetermined. The precursor of this reconciliation might have been Sigmar Polke, who in the 1960s incorporated ready-made images culled from vernacular culture into a highly personal and expressive alchemical process. In the 1980s, artists such as Mike Kelley or Martin Kippenberger, sharpened this integration into an anti-authoritarian posture: culture traverses us, shapes our mind's eye; working through its detritus by way of impulses will unearth and disrupt the shortcomings and perversions of our moral judgments. Four decades later, as these ideologically motivated aesthetic strategies naturally academized themselves and, more importantly, as any shared cultural agora has splintered into fiefdoms strewn across the media field, what remains is a treasure trove of formal processes that continue to be mined to great effect by successive generations of artists.

Whether they originate from the "high" spheres of art history or the "low" ones of the entertainment industry (here Franz Marc's horseys, there your phone's emoji), all of Finn Massie's source materials are reduced to adolescent doodles. Their formal treatment makes them indistinguishable from the signs and figures the artist designs himself, although "design" might be too deliberate of an action to describe the casualness of their execution. Resolutely resistant to any narrative reading, these works are clearly paintings-as-paintings, and invites us to look at them at as two-dimensional funfair rides. Yet, it would be a mistake to infer that all these motifs are merely the building blocks of essentially formalist compositions. The anthropomorphized animal faces that populate each and every one of these works are not simply jubilantly grinning to themselves and each other on the picture plane. They are also aggressively grinning at you.

Working large, Finn Massie's paintings blur our typologies of gesture and format: what looks like a phone doodle becomes a monument which, conversely, is reduced to a graffiti. The visual maelstrom at play is first and foremost a cerebral point of view. Hung very close to each other and covering all windows, the paintings' installation becomes an immersive experience only if one agrees to partake in it. Like accepting to chew on multiple Warheads, these extreme sour candies kids dare each other to eat on the playground.

Fabrice Stroun

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