

Elad Rosen: Pigs and Me

07.11.23 — 23.12.23

Curator: Maya Frenkel Tene

Since always and forever pigs suffered from a bad reputation, associated with ideas of defilement and slime, due to their nature of wallowing in the dirt and eating whatever is in sight like carcasses, feces and rot. In Western culture, pigs have been linked to gluttony and greed, to vulgarity, misogyny, and others, as reflected in phrases like “capitalist pig” or “chauvinist pig”. In literature, cinema and TV, pigs are used to depict an array of characteristics: from Napoleon the oppressive dictator in ‘Animal Farm’ to the piglet who wanted to become a sheep-dog in ‘Babe’; from Miss Piggy who is eternally in-love, to Pesachzon, the pink porcelain piggy bank in Etgar Keret’s novel, representing the capitalist principle of saving in order to consume, destined to be “slaughtered” by a sledge hammer.

In the current exhibition, Elad Rosen is showing a series of works completed recently, as he returned from a few months away in Berlin and its vicinity. This short relocation brought about thoughts on the many forms of pigs and states of piggishness. From the artistic ones, like George Grosz’s caricatures, which mock the upper class of the Weimar Republic, through binging on food that glorifies the act of eating, to laziness and the inclination for a “good life”. Upon his return to Israel and reencountering different states of piggishness locally, his paintings began to emerge, one after the other. The title of this show **Pigs and Me** suggests that Elad does not exclude himself from the collective gluttony. On the contrary, it would seem that he adopts this notion both conceptually and figuratively as in the image of “Self Portrait as a Pig”.

The pigs in Elad’s paintings are situated between the profane and abject and between the innocent and sweet. The references for his paintings were brought about through aimlessly surfing the web for the word Pig, with the intention of neutralizing any specific cultural representation or meme, focusing on how the results are filtered through the search engines. Some of the works begin with an abstract image that slowly take form of a pig, while others appear to have the image of the pig embedded in the background, or as a mask, or a schematic representation.

In another series in the show, the artist’s name becomes the central image. This series asks to dissect the bureaucracy of the artist studio - from open call submissions, grant applications to portfolio preparation - yet, at the same time, it maintains a dialog with conceptual painting, while exercising a degree of self irony. The artist’s signature — whether appearing large or small, prominent or obscure, painted on the canvas or on its back — has preoccupied many artists and theorists over the years. As an image, the original signature is a sign of authorship, yet it opens questions as to the authenticity of the author, time and place. Thus, the preoccupation with self corresponds to images of pigs as well as with the narcissism inherent in the creative act itself.

Elad Rosen (b. 1980) is living and working in Tel Aviv. He holds an MFA from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, graduating with honors (2013). A recipient of The Ministry of Culture Award For An Emerging Artist (2015) and the Osnat Mozes Painting Prize for a Young Artist (2010). A graduate of La Cité internationale des arts residency in Paris (2018) and Artport Tel-Aviv residency program (2015-2016). Recently Rosen curated the exhibition Origin Story (The New Gallery, Artists Studios Teddy, Jerusalem, 2023), which showcased and revealed the artists sources of inspiration and influences from his early career until today.