

KING'S LEAP

Joe W. Speier

Felix Los Angeles 2023

King's Leap presents a new body of work by Joe W. Speier. In these new paintings, made specifically for Felix Art Fair 2023, Speier merges, scrambles, and re-mixes the components in his existing formal toolkit. This coalescence of strategies result in his most complicated works to date while still inviting us into a more representational pictorial space.

The apartments, hotel rooms, and nature scenes in this series are populated mostly by images of women idyllically strumming guitars, painting on walls, sitting in groups, as couples, or alone. The images of the characters and their environments are culled from two primary sources: his collection of amateurish drawings found on the internet and adult coloring book pages. The found drawings, raw, melodramatic, and nascent, are layered with vectors from the coloring books. The vectors, described by Speier as "self-soothing machines," which are, "not for looking, but for using," function as art therapeutic devices. When a user fills in the negative space with color, they perform a meditation that offers relief from their day-to-day lives.

To reinterpret these opposing poles of art therapeutic image production, Speier uses a variety of direct and indirect material gestures on canvas and linen. The painting begins in Photoshop, where he stitches the found imagery together constructing a mise-en-scene. The digital scene is then translated and retranslated by various strategies: transcribing the drawings from a projector with pen or pencil, machine cut vinyl used as stencils or as tinted sections of translucent color, and iPhone photos of the physical painting that are plugged back into photoshop for further digital manipulation. The paintings' dense substrata of poured layers of resinous medium encasing transcribed graphite and pen drawings obscures his hand and relationship to the imagery. Lastly, Speier imposes his dichotomous textural contrasts: impastoed sections of gritty acrylic paint sit atop the dense, glossy body.

Despite the figures in his scenes appearing jovial or communal, the range of Speier's techniques and the paintings' material diversity reinforces their alienated origin: artificial spaces containing personally-rendered impersonal relationships. In stitching together isolated gestures and imagery he seeks to obscure his disposition, further interrogate the mechanisms of "painting", and deflate the image of the vocational artist at work.