

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Victor Man

March 15 – April 27, 2024

Opening Reception: March 15, 5pm – 7pm

515 West 24th Street

New York

Granting equal poetic significance to the extraordinary and the banal, Victor Man's artistic vocabulary examines the terrain where the historical and the personal overlap. Unencumbered by narrative convention, Man's motifs resist associative deduction and instead ricochet between the inscrutable and the known. Though each new body of work sees the artist's recurring themes interacting with a succession of new figures, his compositions consistently interrogate the same dialectic: what does it look like when the spiritual is biased by the existential?

A sensuous key plays throughout Man's tableaux, whether conjured via his use of saturated colors, his heavy, sustained textures, or his choice of subject. In his latest series of *Gypsy Portraits*, Man draws from personal encounters while flattening cultural distances, providing a horizontal approach that addresses both the history of art and the contemporary condition. Referencing themes of diaspora and global migration, these portraits contend with the increasingly urgent plight of those who are cast as perpetual foreigners. While formally acknowledging the medium's complex historical relationship to gaze and authorship, Man's shared and intimate experiences with his subjects results in an unexoticized and deeply humanist perspective.

Presenting a series of propositions that exert equal but oppositional tension, the exhibition is undergirded by a *tonalité grave* that serves as the gravitational center for its seemingly disparate imagery. The art-historical connotations prompted by Man's *Luminary Petals on a Wet Black Bough (Flagellazione di Cristo, Maestro della Crocifissione nel Camposanto sec XIV)* are reconfigured by the painting's proximity to *Illuminated Week*. Titled in reference to the seven holy days that precede Easter, this composition depicts a fragmentary view of the cemetery visible from the artist's window. The chestnut flowers that bloom from the austerity of the painting's gnarled and dry trees generate further semiotic significance when considered in the context of Man's luminously rendered *Brothel Room with Monkey*, creating a visual syntax that suggests a relationship between memento mori, spiritual rebirth, and the base nature of our consumer-driven desires. The artist's painting of the cover of E. Gengenbach's 1952 hagiographic autobiography, *Adieu Satan*, functions as the exhibition's engine of synthesis, exorcising evil from a web conflicting but equivocal sentiments.

In contrast to his poetic ambiguity, Man's paintings are supported by their underlying geometrical definition, a gesture that both anchors his images to the immediate and expands their meaning from the specific to the general. Rough and sophisticated, serene and disconcerting, these works engage in a series of inquiries that can be read as congruous to both conflict and autonomy. Assuming a symmetrical relationship to his subjects, Man probes issues of transference, existential transition, and the artistic exploration of language as the path to possibility. The familiarity with which Man presents his subjects both invokes and recategorizes the politics of looking, conflating the history of painting with a profound sense of personal intimacy.

Bogdan Teodorescu

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com

New York gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm

Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10am-6pm and Saturday, 12pm-8pm

Seoul gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-6pm