

Ciara Lee & Lily Musker
Realism at the Dawn of the Apocalypse
The Horse, Dublin
August 31st - September 30th, 2023

The logo for 'The HORSE' gallery, featuring the word 'The' in a small, white, serif font, followed by 'HORSE' in a larger, bold, white, serif font, all set against a black rectangular background.

For our second anniversary The Horse is very happy to be presenting a duo show *Realism at The Dawn of The Apocalypse*. New paintings by Dublin based Ciara Lee and English painter Lily Musker.

Lee and Musker's work sing from different branches of the same tree. Their representations of raving, dance, free expression, domestic labour and temporal living spaces conjure a speculative response to the unsaid concerns of the uncertain times humanity is currently living through. The scenes Lee and Musker present within the picture plain evoke the necessary/essential/actual events that might take place at the beginning of the end.

The Apocalypse means many things: brimstone and fire, the sublime manifesting itself, the end of the political contract and ultimately an annihilation of humanity. One of its semantic intentions is the lifting off the veils. Its etymology deriving from Old English, via Old French and ecclesiastical Latin from the Greek *Apokalypsin* - meaning to uncover/reveal.

As a group the paintings hanging in the gallery operate as speculative signifiers for what concerns and actions might overwhelm as needs for humanity. Lee's paintings of people raving, dancing as a communal action present a sense of free expression - Rave as a Sub-Culture always presented a rapid ephemeral state of nature, a huge sense of freedom always being its draw: (aside from the music) the dancing in front of speakers was symbolic of the moment.

Lee's paintings highlight dancers from their background, this isolation means we can see the intricacies of the momentary but also everlasting connections people experience whilst in that free state of expression. Lee's paintings present contemporary realism, as brilliantly captured as Corbet: Lee's subjects, through their spatial relationships, their clothes, their proximity are unquestionably placed within the now. In the speculative context of this exhibition Lee's paintings present the symbolic action that might be taken at the beginning of an apocalyptic event.

In a state of survival it is necessary to fixate a sense that everything will carry on as normal. Dancing requires only people and energy, and possibly music, its symbolic meaning within the context presented at the gallery is a cathartic reaction to a sense of helplessness. Lee's paintings, as Muskens do present fragmented representation of form within the frame.

Musker's paintings are symbolic *mise-en-scene*: classical composition drawn from the old masters that renders contemporary scenes with a sense of timelessness. Domesticity beyond our technological age, old vehicles and sound systems, their sharp design from the last century produces aura, manual tools and ancient bucolic sites elicit a sense of safety. Musker, like Lee is a master of presenting a realism of now that is highly focussed, in that only the necessary is presented.

Musker's paintings present an exotic nature to the normal. A form of realism within the paintings that renders actions of living as symbolic and consequential as ritual might. Musker hints at a necessary inter-dependence with the natural world, plants/animals/planets. These moments, just as classical realism requires, ignores the aspirations of life, portraits that encompass action and cease to centre around the trappings of success or a focus on the individual self as being immortalised. *Realism at the Dawn of the Apocalypse* hopefully presents these paintings as beacons of freedom within uncertain times. The exhibition runs until the end of September.

Founded in 2021 The Horse is an artist run contemporary art space in Dublin 1 that seeks to provide a platform for emerging, experimental and underrepresented art practitioners. For sales, viewings and programming in general, please email Matthew Wilkinson - mw@thehosedublin.xyz