Christopher Cook London Solo Exhibition | Sunny Art Prize Winner

Monday 3 August, 2020

Sunny Art Prize 2019/2020 – Prize Winner Solo Exhibition

August 14th – September 12th 2020

Closing the 2019 edition of the Sunny Art Prize is the prizewinner **solo exhibition, *Golden Age*** by British artist Christopher Cook. Cook will be exhibiting his latest series of monochrome paintings that use the Dutch still-life tradition as visual and conceptual backdrop to explore the consequences of colonialism, and the birth of contemporary capitalism. The show will be **on view at the Sunny Art Centre** (30 Gray's Inn Rd, WC1X 8HR, London) from **August 14th – September 12th 2020. The Press View of the exhibition is scheduled for Aug 19th-20th with the artist being present for Q&As. Please contact us to reserve a time slot in order to guarantee social distancing measures.**

Christopher Cook is a contemporary visual artist who has worked in monochrome for the last 20 years, specifically using a fluid medium that combines graphite powder with resin and oil. He appreciates Odilon Redon's position that 'One must respect black, nothing prostitutes it. It does not please the eye, and it awakens no sensuality. It is the agent of the mind far more than the most beautiful colour of the palette or prism'. Monochrome has also opened up for him connections to early black and white photography, as well as gestural ink painting of the Eastern traditions.

The exhibited graphite images are made on coated paper, and produced with a performance-like process in which multiple 'rehearsals' are wiped away until Cook is ready to make the final image, usually over an intensive few days. His preoccupation with 17th-century Dutch still-life painting began with straightforward transpositions of iconic works, which developed into a sustained imaginative inquiry. The Dutch genre is renowned for its sumptuous beauty, but it was also intended as a display of wealth and power, reflecting the colonialist expansionism of that epoch, and this combination came to reflect for Cook a 'coming of age' of capitalism and materialism. This recognition prompted him to evoke contemporary implications of the genre, disrupting the beauty of the various tableaux through the addition of anachronistic elements, often militaristic, to suggest modern-day exploitation, conflict, and protectionism. Cook has stated however that he wishes to maintain a balance between his reverence for the original works and this iconoclastic tendency.

The art historian Jeanne Nuechterlein, in describing his work, remarks: 'What Cook's images do, is focus more squarely on the moral problems involved in the desire to accumulate and then protect wealth, problems he views as intertwined with the structures of capitalism - the urge to exclude or destroy any perceived threat to prosperity leads to defensiveness, social conflict, even military intervention. Thus are opened up new conversations with the traditions of Dutch still life painting.'

Christopher Cook's work has received wide critical acclaim, and has been collected by institutions worldwide including the British Museum, the Fitzwilliam Cambridge, Cleveland Museum of Art, USA, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Paintings from this series were included as a contemporary intervention in the recent historical survey exhibition at York Art Gallery '*Making a Masterpiece: Bouts and Beyond 1450-2020*'.

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