Christopher Cook Solo Exhibition | Golden Age | Sunny Art Prize

Thursday 2 July, 2020

Closing the latest edition of the Sunny Art Prize is the new upcoming prize winner **solo exhibition 'Golden Age'**. British artist Christopher Cook will be exhibiting his latest series of paintings exploring contemporary consumerism and capitalism using the tradition of the Dutch still life as the visual and conceptual backdrop for his artworks. The show will be **on view at the Sunny Art Centre** (30 Gray's Inn Rd., WC1X 8HR, London) between **Aug 14th – Set 12th 2020.**

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. Christopher 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 potential connections to early black and white photography and gestural ink painting of the Eastern traditions.

The exhibited graphite images are made on coated paper. They are based on 17th-century Dutch still-life painting, a preoccupation of Christopher that began with straightforward transpositions of iconic works, but which became a sustained imaginative inquiry. A clear intention of the Dutch genre is to display wealth and power, colonialist expansionism, and beauty, and the more the artist looked, the more this contradiction came to reflect a 'coming of age' of capitalism and materialism. This recognition prompted Christopher to consider contemporary implications of the genre by disrupting the beauty of the various tableaux through the addition of anachronistic elements that suggested modern-day exploitation, conflict, and protectionism. However, he wishes to maintain a balance between his reverence for the original works and this iconoclastic tendency.

York Art Gallery's curator Jeanne Nuechterlein in describing Christopher's work remarked: '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 received critical acclaim and has been collected by institutions worldwide including the British Museum, London and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), New York. Paintings from this series were also included in the recent exhibition at York Art Gallery '*Making a Masterpiece: Bouts and Beyond 1450-2020*'.

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