

marguo

Press Release

Manuel Stehli. Moving Inland

23 June - 24 July 2021

Galerie Marguo, 4 rue des Minimes 75003 Paris



Galerie Marguo is pleased to present *Moving Inland*, a new series of paintings by Swiss-Czech artist Manuel Stehli, on view at the gallery from 23 June to 24 July, 2021.

The paintings presented in *Moving Inland* - plants, landscapes, pairs of hands and groups of figures arranged in careful repose - seem to linger in an interminable moment composed of dusty pastel hues and geometric distillations, like prototypes for an eventual scenario in which these elements may come to life. The title of the exhibition, however, suggests that a certain motion is already afoot, be it psychological introspection or a tactical retreat.

Upon entering the gallery, visitors are met with a large-scale landscape of a rampart in ruins, reduced to its essential lines and volumes and rendered in thin, almost transparent layers of pale fleshy tones. The fortress is a defense mechanism, its presence implies an outside threat, that in turn engenders a sense of intimacy and kinship amongst those circumscribed within its walls.

Stepping into the exhibition past *Untitled (Large Fortress I)* (2021), “moving inland” so to speak, viewers are absorbed into the interior, liminal realm of Stehli’s paintings that hover somewhere in the space between outside and inside, specific and general, real and unreal.

Stehli’s life-size portraits of standing and lounging figures depict familiar scenes of casual contact that feel warm and intimate, yet simultaneously muted. It is as though, despite assuming the correct positions for socialization, Stehli’s figures remain engulfed in their own internal spheres, incapable of truly making contact.

The mysterious air of these portraits, as with the vibrant ficus plants, landscapes, or the gingerly positioned compositions of hands, is in part due to their meticulously defined volumes and lines that paradoxically seem to only enhance their elusive, generic quality. This dialectical tension within Stehli’s work finds a perfect metonymy in the stock images that the artist often uses as a source for his paintings.

Take the stock image of an embrace between two individuals, for example. As they perform this act, which is devoid of any real significance or meaning and thus fake, a very *real*, tangible intimacy is produced between the parties. Stock photography can be understood as simulacra, as defined by French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, in that it substitutes the signs of the real for the real. “The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it *is* the truth which conceals that there is none.” Stock images, and by extension Stehli’s tableaux, are both real and fake; vehicles and place holders for concepts and gestures that we recognize and know from our own experiences.

The notion of the simulacrum, or the “hyperreal”, is alternatively associated with the condition of derealization, which is sometimes triggered in individuals after enduring prolonged periods of isolation or confinement. In this altered mental state, the subject feels detached from their surroundings, as one does when they have a head cold or clogged ears. It’s a subtle, almost imperceptible lag between what is actually happening and how one perceives it, similar to the sensation of being under water, in zero gravity, or outside of time. It is to be inside the action and simultaneously at a remove, psychically beside oneself, like an intimate alienation. Manuel Stehli’s atmospheric paintings envelop the viewer in such a sensation that is at once tender and rife with longing for deeper, genuine contact. As the fog of Covid slowly lifts and we begin tentatively finding ourselves once again in proximity to others, we too may recognize ourselves in Stehli’s ethereal dreamscapes, eagerly yearning to click back into realignment with the real world and those around us.

About the Artist

Manuel Stehli was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1988 and graduated from Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig in 2014. His recent solo exhibitions include *jetzt du* at Schierke Seinecke (Frankfurt, Germany, 2021), *Strangers When We Meet* at Lemoyne (Zurich, Switzerland, 2020), *Sober Speech* at Gallery of the Czech Centre Berlin (Berlin, Germany, 2020), *Some Kind of Change* at Sudio Picknick (Berlin, Germany, 2019), *Tongue Tied* at WERK (Berlin, Germany, 2019), *Wait A Second* at Schierke Seinecke (Frankfurt, Germany, 2018).

Press Inquiries

Vanessa Guo
Co-founder & Partner
vanessa@marguo.com
+33 7 66 86 90 72

#ManuelStehli
ManuelStehliParis
@galeriemarguo
marguo.com

Copyright and Courtesy Credits:

All images:
© Manuel Stehli
Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Marguo

Manuel Stehli
Untitled, 2021
Oil on canvas
240 x 190 cm