

Morgan Presents

American Portraiture: Selling the Self
May 12th—June 15th, 2023
155 Suffolk Street, New York, NY 10002



Alex da Corte, Andy Warhol, Ernesto Renda, Jeff Koons, Leon Golub, Mario Ayala, Mike Shultis, Rebecca Ness, Red Grooms, Sylvia Sleigh, Walter Robinson

This exhibition examines two elements constitutive to a particular vein of American portraiture: appropriation & commodification.

This consideration takes as its starting point Andy Warhol's portrait of Dr. Erich Marx, Warhol's notable German patron, whose collection formed the basis of the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum of Modern Art in Berlin. The picture's provenance further informs our study, as Warhol's friend and dealer Tony Shafrazi owned the work for over seventeen years. This circumstance attunes our perception of the painting, as not only did Shafrazi write his graduate thesis on Warhol's work, he also championed the artist and was the first to exhibit the artistic collaborations between Jean-Michel Basquiat and Warhol.

Jeff Koon's *Art Magazine Ads (Art Forum)* of 1988-89 exist simultaneously as self-portraits and advertisements of the artist's exhibitions across Europe and America—thereby serving as a double portrait of sorts to the concerns of the practice as a whole. These historical examples, which embrace the commercial nature characteristic of this American portraiture are juxtaposed by *Leon Golub's Head (XXVI)* of 1958. Golub's work refutes this commerciality entirely through the violent erasure of the individual identity of the sitter.

The use of appropriation is continued from the American tradition into the contemporary by both Alex da Corte & Mike Shultis. Da Corte's *Fantasy Island II* reworks Ween's 1994 album cover for *Chocolate and Cheese*, originally shot by John Kuczala. Penthouse model Ashley Savage stars, while the original belt is replaced by the quintessentially American hotdog. By replacing the machismo wrestling belt with the phallic hot dog, the work can perhaps be read as a self-portrait of sorts, while through its elevation of Americana, Alex da Corte speaks directly to the earlier appropriation work of Andy Warhol & Richard Prince.

American Portraiture: Selling the Self does not attempt to present a comprehensive survey of the breadth of American Portraiture, but rather hopes to highlight a specific strand unique to American painting. American artists' use of appropriation and their embrace of the commercial, remains a strong legacy of our Twentieth Century artistic heroes, and continues to define a group of artists at the vanguard of painting today.

Morgan Presents is a New York exhibition space founded and directed by Morgan Aguiar-Lucander, an independent curator, writer, dealer, and advisor to both artists and collectors.

Morgan Presents invites pairs of artists to create an exhibition that offers a new perspective into their practice. Morgan Presents is not a representing gallery, and no one artist will exhibit twice during the run of the program. Morgan Presents intends to offer an insight into today's emerging vanguard of painting and sculpture in collaboration and dialogue with established artists and galleries both domestically and abroad. A hardback publication, cataloguing each exhibition, will be published at the conclusion of the project. The curatorial program will be presented out of 155 Suffolk Street in Manhattan, commencing from September 2021.

For press inquiries please contact Morgan Aguiar-Lucander at morgan@morgan-presents.com

Image: Andy Warhol, *Dr. Erich Marx*, 1978, Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas, 40 x 40 inches, 101.6 x 101.6 cm