

Mathieu Malouf: Women and Penguins

January 31–March 16, 2024

New York, NY—Nahmad Contemporary is pleased to announce ***Mathieu Malouf: Women and Penguins***, an exhibition of new paintings by the French-Canadian artist on view from **January 31 through March 16, 2024**. In this recent work, Malouf (b. 1984, Montreal) artfully divides his focus between two distinct subjects: female figures and the flightless, cold-weather bird.

I am genuinely trying to make beautiful paintings. Not beautiful by contemporary standards of beauty, but something more atemporal or enduring. My paintings are not anchored in any particular period. I like art that is beautiful, even if that makes no sense in our era. No one discusses whether things are beautiful or not anymore.

It's more difficult to paint women than men. I have only painted men—nude men, gay men, famous men. I think men can be more ugly and weird, and it doesn't really matter; they are more forgiving. But painting women is more difficult. I started noticing how intensely omnipresent women were in art, and I thought that I probably have something to learn from that; by trying to paint women, maybe I'll discover why. It is a way for me to learn about something that people have traditionally thought is beautiful. Painting women is a way to address art history itself. The Odalisque as a historical genre intrigues me. This was a woman who was essentially enslaved, but she was always richly adorned and confidently portrayed. She looked empowered to me, like Manet's Olympia. The women in my paintings are not goofy like some of my male subjects tend to be. They are not cynical or sarcastic. Maybe painting beautiful women right now is like a comedian today telling a joke from the 1920s.

Penguins have been lingering in my mind for a while. Unlike women, there are not a lot of penguins in art, maybe in a Sigmar Polke. My attraction to them began as a formal one. They are very aesthetically minimal: only three colors and simple shapes. They are crisp and uncomplicated. My painted penguins are materially simple, they are loose and flat, painted in acrylic—unlike the women, who are painted in oil and highly modeled. These two subjects are hard to paint at once, as they occupy different parts of the brain. Maybe there is an allegory there.

– Mathieu Malouf

Malouf lives and works in New York. He has been featured in exhibitions at institutions such as Swiss Institute, New York (2018); Le Consortium, Dijon (2018); LUMA Foundation, Zürich (2017); Artists Space, New York (2017); Stavanger Art Museum (2014); Kunsthalle Lüneburg, (2014); and SculptureCenter, New York (2012). **Work by the artist is included in museum collections worldwide, including the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.**