

*Those That Watch, Those That Know*

Yann Leto

Critical text by Thom Oosterhof

In the heart of Rome, where ancient whispers meet modern sighs, French painter Yann Leto reveals his subconscious canvases. A solo exhibition, "Those That Watch, Those That Know", with Andrea Festa in Rome.

Throughout the lens of the present, Yann sculpts scenes of social masquerade. In Rome and Paris, cities of light, cities of shadow, he divides observers from connoisseurs, beginners from veterans of life's grand theater. Armed with an improvisational practice, Yann invites interpretation, a dialogue with the viewer. At the same time he places himself among observers as nothing but a witness to the birth of his own paintings. The exhibition includes a series of 5 paintings and a central sculptural work. Guiding you through a historical-modern tapestry, when each frame is a snapshot of an unfolding story. All part of a central comic-style narrative that accompanies you on your journey through the exhibition. Inspired by greats such as Magritte and Botticelli, Yann seeks to reveal an ironic reality leaving clues, breadcrumbs, of an alternative truth along the way. Whether it is a snake, a note on the floor that reads "Is this a new beginning?", a dimly lit candle or a prophetic symbol, each is a clue to the greater truths hidden in the moment. The 'Breaking News' painting, which greets you as you enter, frames the scene. A domestic tableau of the banal spectacle of life, in which antagonists are glued to the events unfolding on television. The nonchalance not only of the figure looming in the background, but also the woman in the centre, indicative of her knowledge. Both presented in contrast to the figures depicted in repeating shades of blue. The centrepiece of the exhibition is a dialectical diptych reminiscent of Otto Dix's masterpiece 'Metropolis'. However, rather than depicting the class divide that prevailed in Germany after the First World War, Yann draws our attention to the moment of 'explosion' and the instances that follow. His use of light, a subtle nod to the luminescent cityscapes that pervade the works. Scenes in which, distinguishing whether the protagonist is light or dark becomes a challenge in itself. Scenes of shock and amazement inhibit the work 'The End of the Day', in which the figures, surprised by their banality, startled from their mundanities, seek answers to what appears nightmarish. The knowers are separated by mere glass, with the vast separation occurs within. This tension, this closeness to the truth, a general narrative that accompanies the subjects in the exhibition. Highlighting our ability to see so much so clearly, but often missing what is before our eyes. The final painting, a meditation on the self. Presented through the painful confines of a single person's Photo Booth, the subject, adorned with beauty, struggles with her own self-image against the torment of the common man's bird, the pigeon. Refusing to admit defeat, she longs to realise what she knows, but seems to face the fact that she may never do so. This tragedy, so elegantly presented, is the final note in a symphony of social introspection. Of characters grappling with indistinguishable moments of ignorance and clarity, connected only by one another, brought to life by Yann Leto.