

Jakub Tomáš

"The Field Robot of Myself"

March 8 - April 13, 2024



Asya Geisberg Gallery is proud to open the inaugural exhibition at our new Tribeca location at 45 White Street with Czech artist **Jakub Tomáš**, his first US solo exhibition. Tomáš situates his exuberant painting in sculpture and collage, using cardboard models and theatrical lighting imbued with his study of theatrical scenic design to generate enigmatic or absurdist scenes. The resulting flattened schematic faces are painted within illusively familiar environments, with a surprisingly friendly robot nearby.

The title of his exhibition, "The Field Robot of Myself", feels lost in translation, an apt conjecture as it was generated by feeding prompts into ChatGPT, to get to a slightly surreal, off-kilter phrase. In so doing, Tomáš establishes his most recent series circulating around the awkwardness of how our desires for human simulacra via an automaton can fall flat. We crave a helpmeet or a servant who anticipates our every desire, but pine wistfully for affection and true companionship. Tomáš's painting style – by turns Cubist with his penchant for building maquettes and collaging fragments of internet-sourced imagery, and more recognizable figuration, seems perfect for the task. In scenes of families gathered around the table, a robot sits at the center like a family pet - this new figure appears fully integrated into the social-human structure. "In the Garden" portrays an isolated figure surrounded by flowers which could be pollinated by robot bees; or perhaps the farmer is a mechanical hybrid. Tomáš's narratives remain obscure and playful, as the artist's trademark surreal approach plants bizarre juxtapositions.

The work's forebears include not only the slightly out of sync timelines of Neo Rauch, harshly plotted limbs of Max Beckman and the Expressionists, and adherents of contemporary surreal figuration such as Tal R and Dana Schutz. A rich history of Czech claymation, puppetry, and folk art anchors the richness of figurative approaches, and the sense of a marionette's clunky movements. Masks are a frequent motif - rooted in a childhood full of children's carnivals, ritualistic processions, and local traditions such as the arrival of the devil on Christmas. The mask's allure as both hiding and evoking a humanity is akin to the appeal of the anthropomorphic robot. The mise-en-scenes are neither firmly futuristic or even contemporary - the clothes could be from the 90's or decades earlier; thus unanchored, they promote a multitude of interpretations.

Tomáš explains that, "machines are not merely tools in my paintings but also partners or perhaps idols." His dream-like scenarios probe the inevitability of adding these new companions into our day-to-day dramas, whether in the foreboding "Family Meeting" or the lighthearted "Shoe in the Bowl." With AI's remixing of imagery, artists can treat it as one of many tools, as Tomáš has himself used in prior exhibitions. And yet, as when Tomáš swims in absurdist waters of his own making, they continue to surpass AI in depth, metaphor, and mystery.

Jakub Tomáš was born in Jihlava, Czech Republic, where he lives and works. He received a Master of Fine Arts in Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts, Prague, and studied previously at the University of West Bohemia and the Institute of Art and Design in Plzeň, CZ. He has shown widely in the Czech Republic, with recent solo exhibitions at Oblastní Galerie Vysočiny, Jihlava; Stage Garden Gallery, Rožnov pod Radhoštěm; Městská Galerie, Týn nad Vltavou; Šopa Gallery, Košice; GAVU Cheb; Galerie Václava Špály, Prague; Nová Galerie, Prague; and NEVAN CONTEMPO, Prague; and international exhibitions in Austria, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom.



Jakub Tomáš
The Pets, 2023
Oil on canvas
47.25h x 51w in



Jakub Tomáš
Someone is Watching, 2023
Oil on canvas
63h x 51w in