

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Juan Araujo: Laughing and the Storm

16 March – 14 April 2022

Private View:

Tuesday 15 March, 6–8pm

Gallery Hours

Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–5pm



Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to present its second solo exhibition by Venezuelan artist Juan Araujo. This new body of paintings follows a major solo installation at Art Basel Unlimited in September 2021.

The exhibition highlights Araujo's recent exploration of the theme of melancholia, likening the sense of isolation imposed upon us by the pandemic to the loneliness experienced by artists in their search for creativity. Araujo's interest in the artist's studio as a site of ritual is reflected in many of the works being displayed on wooden easels.

Araujo's hyper-realistic depictions evoke the spirit of the images he reproduces. Edvard Munch's 'Self-Portrait 'à la Marat,' Beside a Bathtub at Dr. Jacobson's Clinic' portrays a haunting image of the artist during psychological treatment in the early 1900s. Araujo's loose brushstrokes echo the blurred quality of Munch's self-portrait, accentuating the sense of disconnect and reflection captured in the original.

Another painting fuses Rembrandt van Rijn's self-portrait 'Rembrandt Laughing' with a digital photograph of a stormy sky. His jovial figure emerges from the tempestuous clouds, alluding to the fine line that separates joy and anguish.

Several works in the exhibition reference the colour palettes of nineteenth century paintings that embody the Romantic movement. By extracting the dominant pigments in Caspar David Friedrich's 'The Sea of Ice' and 'The Death of Sardanapalus' by Eugène Delacroix, Araujo examines the use of colour to portray states of contemplation.

Araujo's captivation with modern and postmodern architecture is demonstrated in works such as 'Reception Desk', an image of Alvar Aalto's Paimio Sanatorium in Finland. Here, the artist looks at Aalto's use of colour in the hospital as a contributor to the healing process of its patients.

Spanning hyper-realism and abstraction, the works on display see Araujo interpret various types of source material to unveil the complex relationship between art and the psyche.

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About the artist

Juan Araujo was born in 1971 in Caracas, Venezuela. He lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal.

Araujo's large-scale installation 'The Hunter's Dream' was shown at Art Basel Unlimited 2021. The artist was the subject of a major solo presentation 'Measurable distances of space and air' at PEER, London in 2019. He has exhibited widely throughout South America and internationally including solo presentations at Culturgest, Lisbon, Portugal (2018); Instituto Inhotim, Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, Brazil (2013) and Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain (2008).

His work is found in numerous public collections including Tate, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Jumex Collection, Mexico City and Instituto Inhotim, Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

About Stephen Friedman Gallery

Stephen Friedman Gallery represents exceptional emerging and mid-career artists from around the world. Since its inauguration in 1995, the gallery has been based in Mayfair on Old Burlington Street. The gallery now has three spaces in which it hosts solo and group exhibitions throughout the year. Additional works can be viewed by appointment in private rooms and office spaces. There is also a facility to exhibit outdoor sculpture in a landscaped private garden.