

Galerie Nicolas Robert

Kris Knight
Auscultate

From October 21 to November 21, 2020

Galerie Nicolas Robert is pleased to present “Auscultate” an exhibition of recent figurative paintings by Toronto-based artist Kris Knight. With *Auscultate* (to learn by listening), Knight continues his exploration of intimacy through narratives that revolve around performance, queerness and representation.



With the majority of these new works completed during lockdown, Knight drew inspiration from memory and personal experience, as well as pre-social isolation photographic source material often portraying his friends and acquaintances. The reflexivity in the narrative of these intimate works present paintings and portraits that retreat from the muchness of the world yet subtly mirror and respond to it just the same. Leveraging silence over distraction, learning over ignorance and listening over speaking, these somber, tender, nostalgic and sometimes humorous reflections of daily life often have an underlying discomfort of total quiet and the uncertainty of now.

Voyeurism and the dynamic experience of looking and being seen is evident in the majority of Knight’s portraits. His paintings of people, often of LGBTQ friends and acquaintances are both a celebration of the beautiful individuality that is queerness and but also a vehicle for his own storytelling; his models are both the subject and the performer. Knight’s portraits invite an encounter between subject and viewer but also employs these staged sittings as a way to present portals of the artist past and present. He finds inspiration in not only celebrating the individualism of his sitters but also from listening and learning about them and the privileged bond of sharing stories together as a way to feel more comfortable while held in each other’s gaze. “I ask a lot of questions when someone sits for my initial photo sessions and sketches. Especially when it’s the first time they come to my studio, it can often feel like an awkward interview or first date” states the artist. “I do this to appear less nervous when meeting someone new but it’s also a way to preserve someone in my memory for after they leave my studio. The more they open up, the more comfortable we become by the sharing of our often-uncomfortable stories. I am reminded of these individual’s stories when I paint them from the reference materials I took but it also stirs up my own memories and how so many experiences that queer people go through are just as common as they are unique.

Knight began the majority of the paintings in *Auscultate* after a routine visit to the cardiologist a few weeks before lockdown. “I was inspired by the doctor’s careful examination of my condition that has always been deemed hereditary (yet seemed more important with this year’s birthday). I paid close attention to how deeply my doctor was listening and looking at me but also the questions I was being asked and how his scribbles and sketched diagrams were included in his assessment so that he could reach a final diagnosis. I started to see a parallel to his method of examination and the way I look at my sitters within the experience of seeing and being seen. With lockdown and self-isolation in full effect, Knight started going through his archive of images, sketches and collages from previous model sessions as well as personal

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images and stock photos to help flesh out a new series of paintings inspired by the heightened sense of introspection and wistfulness that intensified with the increased restrictions placed upon us in 2020.

With *Auscultate*, Knight continues his exploration of contemporary masculinity but moves his work further away from the theatrical narrative of his past series - focusing on images of wellness, respite, burnout, and personal recollection; presenting a domestic, intimate world, that's part of the much bigger world outside of it.