

ANNA ZORINA GALLERY

NEW YORK CITY | LOS ANGELES TEL +1 212 243 2100

CHARLIE ROBERTS

Short Stories

On view: June 16-July 15, 2023

Opening Reception: Friday, June 16th, 5-8 PM

Anna Zorina Gallery is pleased to present *Short Stories*, Charlie Robert's debut exhibition with the gallery. *Short Stories* features new paintings that offer imagined portraits of contemporary existence, each a richly detailed tableau shaped by Robert's love of pop culture and exploration of the philosophical complexities of life.

As an avid consumer of 1990s cultural milieu, Roberts builds a unique visual lexicon from the movies, books, and music of his generation. Mining the often-overlooked background details of a scene in a movie or music video, he hones in on objects, decor, and color in his paintings to tell a fuller story, applying them as coded identifiers to help define his characters. One such example is *The Castle on Sunset* where the protagonist is looking out a large window onto the lush greenery and peaceful setting of Chateau Marmont's inviting pool. Along the window frame are vertically taped note cards signifying camera shots and images of attractive men. Resting on the window sill is a copy of "Which Lie Did I Tell," an indispensable reference for any aspiring screenwriter or filmmaker, alongside a BMW key chain. Such details help add color to the painted subject - someone who is well-off working in the entertainment industry, perhaps pining for a dip in the pool but is pressured by deadlines and responsibility. Throughout his process, Roberts simultaneously develops fictional narratives as he paints, composing new environments that are specifically appointed, much like a set designer preparing a movie set. His canvases are densely layered and purposefully constructed to draw the viewer closer and make possible personal connections to these imagined worlds.

Inspired by 17th century Dutch and Flemish masters, Roberts employs similar doorways, windows, and mirrors as formal framing devices to add further dimensions and space for details throughout this series. However, by painting many of his figures with their backs to the viewer looking either out a window onto the horizon or in a mirrored reflection, he also offers conceptual portals into the private, interior worlds of his subjects as they stand lost in contemplation, taken away by some deep reverie. Describing them as "a revolving cast of recurring characters," Roberts, thus, acts as the writer and director of his films, conjuring up inventive narratives from quotidian life to freely explore the fantasies and subconscious terrain of the human psyche.

While most characters in *Short Stories* are fictional, a real person is portrayed in *L'avenir de Basket* or *The Future of Basketball*. The painting depicts the closely-watched 19-year-old phenom Victor Wembanyama at the cusp of his professional NBA career. Imagining his last few hours of anonymity and quiet before the draft, Roberts paints the young athlete ruminating on his extraordinary position, capturing a pivotal moment of solitude before his life is changed forever.

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The exhibition brings together the highly stylized, diverse worlds of the artist's infinite imagination as each canvas is read like a short story. Collectively, they invite us to consider the ways our lives unfold through innumerable moments of reflection as we navigate the beauty and complexities of the human experience.

CHARLIE ROBERTS was born in Hutchinson, Kansas in 1983 and currently lives and works in Oslo, Norway. He studied painting at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, Canada after transferring from Kansas University. His work has been exhibited in numerous solo and group shows including those at Ojiri Gallery in London (2022), WOAW Gallery in Beijing and Hong Kong (2021), The Hole in New York, Galleri Golsa in Oslo (2019), Marlborough Contemporary in London (2016), David Risley Gallery in Basel (2014), and Galleri Magnus Karlsson in Stockholm (2013), to name a few.

For further information, please contact the gallery at +1212-243-2100 or via email at info@annazorinagallery.com.