

ANNA ZORINA GALLERY

532 W 24 ST NYC NY 10011 TEL 212 243 2100

BEN CRASE

Smoke On The River

May 23 - June 29, 2024

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 23rd, 6-8PM

Anna Zorina Gallery is pleased to present Ben Crase's American solo debut exhibition, *Smoke On The River*. The exhibition title is drawn from the artist's fond memories of floating on the river every summer with his dad. His late father would be guiding the boat, oars in hand and cigarette in mouth. While initial interpretation of the title may stir alarm, for the artist, it invokes a sense of nostalgia and tranquility. This upending of expectations is at the heart of Crase's artistic vision, intending to challenge the common perceptions and narratives associated with the American West.

Crase represents scenes inspired by his hometown of Butte, Montana and his subjects are living testaments to the eccentricities of the isolated area. Playing on his familiarity of the lore of the West, Crase has the keen ability to examine and question the stories and stereotypes that lead towards the distillation of his hometown into the setting of dramatic genre. The artist dismantles the cowboy narrative by presenting an idiosyncratic style marked by richly-hued attire, lavish backgrounds and intricate decorations. These details emerge through the thick application of lush swathes of oil paint and oil pastel to provide a physical depth to the humanity of the characters.

The many figures that inhabit Crase's paintings bear a striking resemblance to each other as if they are brothers or mirror images. They seem weary yet cheerful, each one wearing an extravagant, bright pink hat with no shame nor pretense. By creating this uncanny similarity and shared sense of style, the artist personifies the common thread that connects us all. Crase visualizes empathy by representing the figure as seeing his soul within the others around him. On a timeless plane of existence, these men lead vibrant lives engaging in the spirit of community, vulnerability and camaraderie.

BEN CRASE (b. 1976, Butte, Montana) lives and works in San Diego, California. He is a self-taught painter who has been featured in international solo exhibitions at PIERMARQ*, Sydney, Australia; Sorry We Are Closed, Brussels, Belgium; The Finch Project, London, United Kingdom and Galerie Rompone, Cologne, Germany.

For more information, please contact Marie Nyquist at +1212-243-2100 or via email at marie@annazorinagallery.com.