

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

Guilty Pleasures

Curated by Pierre El Khoury

March 28 - May 17, 2025

Espace II
3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, Paris 4^e



Sacha Cambier de Montravel
Il a neigé dans nos cœurs, 2025 (detail), oil on wood, 50 x 34 cm (19 5/8 x 13 3/8 in.)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is pleased to present *Guilty Pleasures: curated by Pierre El Khoury*, a group exhibition that brings together young contemporary artists, including Sacha Cambier de Montravel, Laslo Familiar Roy, Daniel Fleur, Léo Kpodzro, Renske Linders, Clément Poplineau and Alexander Skats.

The works of these seven artists engage in a dialogue around a common subject: that of guilty pleasures, those that stimulate a subtle tension between enjoyment and guilt. Their complexity stems from a connection between the intimate and the collective: personal tastes collide with social norms, and guilty pleasures evolve as they change. In a world marked by globalization and new technologies, they reinvent themselves, prompting us to ponder their new forms, their transgressions.

Fine watches, luxury leather goods, sparkling diamonds, velvet sofas and exquisite manicures are deployed across the gallery. Here, the works flirt with *kitsch*, which, through its deliberate excesses and artifices, invades the space like a mirror of our society, saturated with superficialities. At a time when digital culture permeates our daily lives, new forms of consumerism emerge, often ostentatious, and the subjects of the paintings reveal this evolution. The proliferation of carefully filtered images on social media has fueled new desires – irrational ones – like the quest for eternal youth, sometimes at the cost of excessive reliance on cosmetic surgery.

In this constellation of works, arranged throughout the gallery, bodies indulge, like Bacchus, slumped on silky fabrics as he awaits *the bacchanals*¹ ; feminine curves melt into the flowers and the dunes, while a hand grips a silk sheet, manifesting pleasure in action. The representation of the body, whether it is nude or draped in a light cloth, has always reflected the values and aspirations specific to each era. From the ideal of the body in classical art, often viewed through the lens of the male gaze, to the more modern interpretations of Paul Cézanne or Suzanne Valadon – the first woman to paint a man in the nude, frontally and in large format – nudity has continually evolved. The current exhibition reveals its contemporary representation: subjects become active models, in possession of their bodies and desires.

On the central wall, canines populate a frozen landscape. Calling to mind Pieter Brueghel the Elder's painting *Hunters in the Snow*, the figures seem to be wandering aimlessly in the snow: they walk, dig, or try to seize a cloth with their protruding canines. However, a river suggests a path to follow toward the horizon. These creatures appear to be searching for a haven amid the world's chaos, a place where they can explore their identity in complete tranquility. This specificity echoes Arthur Rimbaud's *Une Saison en enfer*, where the poet opens up about his inner demons and tries to give meaning to his existence.

Sometimes, artists go as far as painting themselves as isolated figures, withdrawing from the outside world. Between daydreams and intimate reflections, they reveal themselves, accompanied by their desires, their anxieties and their secret pleasures. For human desire occasionally takes on many facets, and sometimes, far from manifesting themselves in action, they find themselves suspended between two states, like this woman seen from behind, admiring a radiant landscape from her window. Between voyeurism and repressed desire, she is drawn to somewhere else: the window becomes at once an opening and a subtle boundary, reminding us that guilty pleasure resides as much in the anticipation as in the intensity of a desire.

Pierre El Khoury, curator of the exhibition *Guilty Pleasures*, is an art advisor and independent curator.

¹ The bacchanals were ancient festivals dedicated to Bacchus, the Roman god of wine and ecstasy, celebrations of excess, immoderation and the transgression of norms.

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Guilty Pleasures,
curated by Pierre El Khoury
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