

Sean Landers

Animal Portraits

November 19, 2022 - January 7, 2023

Various Small Fires is proud to present an exhibition of new paintings by New York artist Sean Landers. On view in Dallas, *Animal Portraits* is the artist's first solo presentation in Texas.

Over the course of an illustrious career, Landers has made work that meditates on the artist's existential struggles. In early paintings, he scrawls diaristic text across large scale canvases to expose an emotionally vulnerable state of life as an artist. In other work, he employs a recurring cast of characters that includes a clown, a chimpanzee, and a figure made of wood named Plankboy. Landers obscures the boundary between himself and these alter egos, utilizing humor and parody to lay bare the struggles of artistic endeavors. Throughout, he wields personal experiences as a lens for interpreting universal musings on self-knowledge and self-doubt.

In this body of work painted during the pandemic, Landers expands on this practice through seven portraits of animals. Aphoristic text accompanies most of the portraits, written above each animal as a visual expression of its inner dialogue. He crops in close to each of their faces and emphasizes their quietly expressive nature. A lynx peers into the distance while it wonders, "Are they talking about me? What are they saying, is it good?" The viewer is directly addressed in another work in which a fox asks, "Do you still love me?" One can interpret these texts as an artist grappling with the ebbs and flows of success, but they're also reflective of thoughts encountered by all humanity.

Landers' depictions of a whitetail deer and rooster contain no words, as if the animals have guarded their sensitivities. Viewers can imagine what the creature is thinking or look inward and reflect on their own concerns. They can relate to the animal, and in turn the artist, as they contemplate the anxiety of making, the fear of failure, and the striving for permanence.

Sean Landers (b. 1962, Palmer, MA) is a painter and multimedia artist living and working in New York. He received his MFA from Yale University School of Art and his BFA from Philadelphia College of Art. He has exhibited widely and had solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis; Consortium Museum, Dijon, France; Kunsthalle Zürich, Switzerland; Petzel, New York; greengrassi, London; Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels; Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo; Capitain Petzel, Berlin, and Ben Brown Gallery, Hong Kong. His work has been included in exhibitions at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; New Museum, New York; MoMA PS1, Long Island City; White Columns, New York; Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams; ICA, Miami; Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, Florida; Musée Magritte, Brussels; Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, France; Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany; Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany; 4th Berlin Biennial, Germany; DESTE Foundation, Athens; and Kunstmuseum Luzern, Lucerne, Switzerland. His works are included in public collections including The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Brooklyn Museum, New York; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Denver Art Museum, Colorado; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Seattle Art Museum, Washington; the Tate Modern, London; Fundación/ Colección Jumex, Mexico City; Sammlung Goetz, Munich, Germany; Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg, Germany; and The Kistefos Museum and Sculpture Garden, Jefnaker, Norway, among many others.