

## Logan Criley: Pure Beauty

30 Orchard St, Gallery 1 ▪ June 29 - Aug 6, 2022



Harkawik is pleased to announce our second exhibition with Los Angeles-based painter Logan Criley, *Pure Beauty*. Criley is among the most deliberate of painters. His work is tightly controlled and precisely modulated, and this is true both in terms of the formal, technical, and allusive aspects within each painting as well as across the entire body of work. He has conceived of this exhibition not so much as a series, but as a stage setting. It is operatic. The characters in this opera are constructed out of the historical conventions of painting, from the various genres of traditional European academic painting-landscape, still life, history painting, as well as from compositional techniques drawn from various moments in the history of painting such as the dynamic symmetry characteristic of the baroque, the grid of photorealism,

or the spontaneity of gestural abstraction. These are juxtaposed within and across works, and then filtered through extremely attenuated palettes often borrowed from fashion editorials of the late 90s and early aughts. His subject matter is also often drawn from this moment, but this is part of a broader fascination with experiencing the past as a kind of archaism, which one finds signaled for instance by the broken statues of *Locus Solus*, or the tragic and defunct Concorde jet in *Departure* and *Transcontinental Pastoral*, and even in the gestural abstraction of *Soft Quasar* and *The Cold Song* which recall abstraction as a high-water mark of modernism. Recession is the backdrop against which all of these peculiar characters are staged, so that the melancholy of the fragment and the ruin seem to emerge not unironically from the dispassionate hand of an undertaker. Indeed, a good part of what makes Criley's work so deliberate, so committed to slowing the aesthetic impulse through which painting's material and expressive conventions are naturalized, is his insistence on implicating himself in his own questions about painting. Everything is constructed. Nothing is naturalized. Or, for that matter, realized. And Beauty, if it were to be called pure rather than real, emerges from the work in a way which has led Criley to compare his pictures to the hot house orchids cultivated by Jean des Esseintes in J.K. Huysman's *A Rebours*, "specimens that can exist only under the controlled conditions of my studio."

—Edward Sterrett