



A skull, a condom, and Velázquez
Daniel Spivakov

16 September - 16 November 2023

opening times: Mon, Tues, 12 - 6 pm
& by appointment

Although this isn't the first time Daniel Spivakov has used the Old Master's stage to demonstrate his own conflicted vision of contemporary arcady, a now nine-month stint in Venice has clearly reinforced a motivation to revisit this relationship.

For the exhibition »A skull, a condom, and Velázquez Spivakov« chooses Diego Velázquez as a backdrop for his paintings. Initially using digital printing to render monochromatic scans of the Spanish painter's work onto canvas, he then begins his usual painting process. With a particular attraction to oil, Spivakov uses paint as a means to place the image outside of its original context. Baroque silhouettes morph into rib-like marks, blurring the forms of skeleton and condom.

Those who have been to Venice will know it still doesn't feel designed towards supporting twenty-first-century human life. Any evidence of this is an intense and sometimes startling contrast. Cigarette butts, gum and graffiti sit tight against the foundations of art history. Whilst it's easy to protest this slow and laboured destruction of artefact, Spivakov chooses to accept the new-found cohabitation with antiquity. There is beauty in age, regardless of how ugly it can become.

Always alert to the continuous stream of visual juxtaposition squeezed through the zeitgeist, Spivakov utilised a chance happening to catalyse a new body of work. On discovering the patina left by a condom in between the pages of a book of Velázquez prints, he noticed a new opportunity to use painting in further exploring the post-historical interpretation of relic. Can we still let bygones be bygones? How can we ground ourselves within an experience that feels almost uncomfortably present when we are so aware of the past?

Spivakov's answer is one shrouded with humour, strangeness and self-deprecation; mechanisms we can all use to aid the anxiety that persists through an over-stimulated and de-sensitised dependence on present-day information overdose.

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words by Callum Jones