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ART REVIEWS

New York Galleries: What to See Right Now

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Leonhard Hurzlmeier

Through Nov. 3. Rachel Uffner Gallery, 170 Suffolk Street, Manhattan; 212-274-0064, racheluffnergallery.com.



Leonhard Hurzlmeier's "Candle in the Wind," from 2019.
Leonhard Hurzlmeier and Rachel Uffner Gallery

There's a cheerful self-deprecation to the bright colors and sharp edges of Leonhard Hurzlmeier's paintings. (Though his exhibition "Told Tales," at the Rachel Uffner Gallery, includes some charming sculptures and an illuminating little group show of work by other artists, curated by Christian Ganzenberg, it's Mr. Hurzlmeier's own paintings that are the main event.) They make you think of the Bauhaus, that idealistic interwar German art school — but we know what happened to the idealists of the 1930s. But there's also an inherent irony in pictures that seem so easy to read just because we're all so well practiced at reading them.

"Candle in the Wind," portraying a thick white column in a wooden bowl, is an immediately recognizable image. But it's also full of little winks and nudges. Mr. Hurzlmeier uses nearly the same teardrop shape for the candle's tilting flame as for its bulbous drips of wax. The purple background looks like empty space, and the yellow beneath like a flat tabletop, though they're both just rectangles. The white eyelid shape at the candle's tip is such a conventional marker of roundness and depth that you barely notice that no depth is actually created.

But similar conventions govern the way we see everything. Where Mr. Hurzlmeier's entrancing trickery becomes transcendent is in the painting "Elephant in the Room." A pale, eyeless beast in near silhouette, it's weirdly difficult to focus on, making it a thrilling attempt at the impossible goal of showing the world as it is.

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