

# NINO MIER GALLERY

LOS ANGELES | BRUSSELS | NEW YORK

**Charlie Roberts**

***Possible Worlds***

**Brussels | Allard 41**

**June 21 – July 20, 2024**

Nino Mier Gallery is pleased to announce Charlie Roberts' first solo exhibition in Brussels: *Possible Worlds*. For this occasion, Roberts presents a series of new works inspired by his childhood in Kansas and his later life in both California and New York, as well as films, books, and music that have been influential to the artist. Each work serves as a condensed narrative inviting viewers to gain insights into the artist's world. The paintings are characterized by a sense of mystery and dreaminess, illustrated by the artist's elongated and distorted figures, often portrayed alone, that sometimes appear sleeping or in a suspended moment of anticipation and waiting.

Growing up in Kansas, Roberts experienced "ranch" life with many houses around him designed by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, known for their integration with the natural world and rational structures. Inspired by this architecture, Roberts extracts geometric elements and uses them as a constructive device to create the backdrop for many of his paintings. For example, in *Yellow Clock*, a geometrically gridded bathroom makes up the majority of the scene, and in *The Visitor*, the protagonist stands within a domestic interior with a stone wall and a wooden window with aligned shutters, heavily inspired by the modernist house designed by Hiram Hudson Benedict, as seen in Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Zabriskie Point*.

Roberts' paintings balance reality and fantasy, rational intention and free association of ideas and thoughts. Some characters who inhabit Roberts' worlds are real, as in *Peter in LA*, which depicts Peter Schuyff, a close friend and former teacher of Roberts, at work in his Los Angeles studio. Other times, the characters are entirely fictional, such as the cyborg lady in *Afternoon Tea*—a half-human, half-robot figure—or other half-human, half-dog figures that feature in the painting *Merchant Marines*. The presence of real life and fiction is a distinctive element of Charlie Roberts' works, creating an effect of disorientation and mystery.

Another important and recurrent element in his works is the presence of a window, whether it be one or multiple. Through them the artist manages to cut out a space of the painting and allow the viewer to look beyond the initial scene. In many paintings the characters are looking out of the window, and for the artist, this is a representation of his daydream state of creation, a moment that you look out waiting for something to happen or come in.

Through the window in *Yellow Clock*, we see grey skyscrapers under a burning post-apocalyptic sunset, with two people in the center relaxing in a gridded bathroom. The spaces we see inside and outside are very different, almost in contrast with each other, creating two very different moods in the same painting. In *Tonight at Noon*, a title inspired by jazz songs of the 1920s by Charles Mingus, well-known landmarks like the Brooklyn Bridge appear from the window, giving the viewer a clue as to the setting of the painting. The same occurs in *Red Paris Apartment*, where the main character looks outside the window contemplating a Parisian landscape recognizable thanks to the white chapel of Montmartre in Paris.

Whether the references are true and close to the artist's life, completely fantastical, inspired by an dream, a David Lynch movie (as in *Lost Highways*), sci-fi books or American modernist architecture, they all belong to Roberts' poetics, creating a dense constellation of allegories and references. For Roberts, each element in his works is like a key, a door to his world, to his life and to his many

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inspirations. Each element becomes like a character of a wider and longer story, and sometimes these characters come back and we can see them again in multiple contexts and perspectives. In *Possible Worlds* we are all invited to enter and transport ourselves through Roberts's colorful and surrealistic universe.

*Charlie Roberts (b. 1983, Kansas, US; lives and works in Oslo, NO) Roberts graduated from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in Vancouver, Canada, and previously studied painting at Kansas University. His work has been shown in international galleries and institutions, with many solo and group shows in galleries such as Woaw Gallery, Beijing and Marlborough Contemporary, London and Museum such as the Chelsea Museum in New York among many others. He currently lives and works in Oslo.*