



**RATS.**  
An exhibition by **Alfred d'Ursel**  
March 5 - April 21, 2019

In the beginning of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (October 15, 1905), King Morpheus sends a messenger to summon Nemo to his palace in the dream world. This messenger, resembling a clown and called an Oomp, presents the little boy with «a little spotted night horse,» named Somnus, to ride across the night sky to Slumberland, but warns him «you mustn't whip him or drive him fast.» Of course, Nemo and Somnus are almost immediately challenged to a race by a pink monkey and a green kangaroo. You can probably see where this is going.

For his first exhibition in New York, Alfred d'Ursel presents a series of paintings where the water is black and the sky less so, a curving landmass separating the two. In these works, a tile of white has the shape of a building and the glow of the moon. In one, there is not much to speak of except a slither or a trace. These gloomy landscapes provide the key to a show that equally thematizes a childish fear of darkness, and a more jaded anxiety of exposure. It also questions the fantasies of innocence and safety that enable such dramas. Who is the subject looking into the night, and what do they want from it? D'Ursel presents a tepid naivety that entertains the idea of its own ruin.

His ongoing nod to The New York Times, is here seen from a child's perspective: candid and straightforward as apple pie. Drawing on the world of comics and children's books, the paintings, in the end, are as playful as they are sinister. The protagonist is both hero and villain, and the "rats" not necessary a threat of invasion, but just as often the exclamation of regret that follows a slapstick blunder. Like the end of every comic strip is a new beginning, each picture takes another stab at revealing and concealing.

Whether shrouded in darkness or edited into blinding exposure, the only stable presence on d'Ursel's paintings is a pervasive suspension of content; a sentence that ends on a comma.

*RATS.* is a horror film with no monsters, a romantic drama with not a single heart broken. It is an experiment in reduction and veiling that works its magic by omission.

**Alfred d'Ursel** (b. 1986) lives and works in Brussels.

Recent solo exhibitions include S.M.A.K, Ghent and C L E A R I N G Brussels in 2018.

His work was also featured in group exhibitions, including MUKHA, Antwerp; CAB, Brussels; Shanaynay, Paris; Gaudel de Stampa, curated by Michael Callies, Paris; C L E A R I N G, Brussels.