



CLEARING

Adam Alessi
Cruiser's Creek

September 9 – October 22, 2022

For his first solo show with C L E A R I N G, Adam Alessi has realized a suite of works comprising oil-on-linen paintings and pencil drawings on paper gathered under the exhibition title *Cruiser's Creek*.

Over the past century, the slippery yet almost banal notion of the *Uncanny* seems to have permeated cultural history in waves. The concept's inception lies with Freud's analysis of the nightmarish E.T.A. Hoffmann tale "The Sandman", permeates Hans Bellmer's attractive-repulsive dolls, and somehow explains Oskar Kokoshka's horrific yet touching lifesize rendering in feathers and horsehair of his unrequited love, Alma Mahler. Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy rebooted the *Uncanny* in their 1990s "Heidi", where social hierarchies are soiled by means of dummies, puppets, and masks, and Cindy Sherman employed flappy latex prosthetics combined with disjointed mannequins in an attempt to topple fashion conventions in her 1994 *Comme des Garçons* campaign.

Reassuringly familiar in their unsettling nature, Adam Alessi's menagerie of figures in *Cruiser's Creek* seem to be fed (perhaps unwittingly) on these historical markers of the genre. However, as if constructing a theater stage for his characters to play on, and a variegated wardrobe of clothes and prostheses for them to wear, the artist pulls from an array of art-historical imagery, popular culture, and personal references.

The characters—sometimes masked and grimacing, sometimes pale-skinned and absent—are placed within pulsating textures and sceneries that in turn trigger our hazy memory. Velveteen fabrics sprawl in the foreground, blocks of rich color recall Felix Vallotton or Edouard Vuillard's interest in interior decoration and floral pattern, and Leigh Bowery covered in big red dots, starring in The Fall's 1985 hit video clip "*Cruiser's Creek*" is reincarnated as a faceless ghoul. Figures dear to the artist yet unknown to us also haunt the works: a lover, and an old canine companion resurface in a dreamlike homage.

Framing his subjects as if in a cinema still, each scene holds an intriguing narrative: a slow kiss or an ominous whisper caresses a neck of gray flesh, a deal is struck in the light of the moon, Pulcinella and her dead-eyed companion plot something nasty beneath their oversized latex masks and body sheaths. In a shift of perspective, four more characters stare back at us, their deep-sunk eyes calling to plunge into their oniric world, teetering between nightmare and fantasy, between attraction and repulsion.

Studies show that most of our dreams are not good ones. Adam Alessi's work seems to question how we might make such a stark distinction between dream and nightmare, from which scenes we wish to wake up, which stories we might wish to pursue, which images we wish to live with, and which ones we would rather not. As the Klimt-esque grid of a woman's pantsuit glitches off the canvas, we're reminded of the fragile nature of dreams, and our supposed passive relation to them as worlds where things rise to the surface and fall back beyond our control.

C L E A R I N G

In 1865, the German chemist Friedrich August Kekulé awoke from a strange reverie: he imagined a snake forming a circle and biting its own tail. After years working feverishly to describe the true chemical structure of benzene, the dream of an ouroboros supposedly helped him to accurately realize that the chemical's structure formed a ring.

Benzene is of course present in the oil paint Alessi uses to build up the many complex layers of his smirking menagerie. And the moral in the chemist's story finds a happy analogy as oniric combinations might just help process the anxieties and uncertainties experienced today, and offer a solution, or at least some respite and (comic, uncanny) relief.

Adam Alessi (born 1994 in Camarillo, California USA) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

He is a self taught artist.

Solo and group exhibitions of his work have been held at Smart Objects, Los Angeles; NADA House with Zoe Fisher Projects, New York; Felix Art Fair with M+B, Los Angeles; Nino Mier, Los Angeles; Public Gallery, London; and C L E A R I N G, New York and Brussels.

He will have a solo show at C L E A R I N G, New York in 2023.