

Alan Stanners | Wild Life

11 October - 16 November 2024

Brooke Benington is pleased to present Wild Life, a solo exhibition by Alan Stanners. The exhibition will be at Brooke Benington's Fitzrovia gallery at 76 Cleveland Street, London W1T 6NB from 11 October - 16 November. The public opening will take place on Thursday 10 October from 6-8 pm to coincide with Fitzrovia Lates during Frieze Week. Stanners presents a collection of paintings and drawings which explore the intersection of portraiture and abstraction, using hyper-realistic renderings of fictional subjects to engage viewers with narratives about our evolving relationship with the environment, cultural mythology, and technology. The works capture the extraordinary and unsettling elements within the mundane aspects of everyday life.

In Wild Life, flat primary hues and shifting tones create dislocated contexts for the figures, transforming the canvas into a performative space where the drama unfolds. Recognisable and anomalous objects, rendered with precision or left silhouetted, evoke abandonment and anticipation. The interplay of scale and the rigidity of the canvas frame distort artistic intention, signalling potential unease. Minimalist grid-based painting influences are evident in the simple divisions of figure and ground, imposing restrictive boundaries on the depicted bodies.

Unknown figures gaze passively out of Stanners' paintings, often occupying intimate spaces together without acknowledging one another. Their disinterested relationship is disquieting, inviting viewers to wonder about their connections. This sense of unease is heightened by awkwardly held hands, unnaturally slack mouths, and unfamiliar objects. Stanners' handling of paint shifts between stylised representation and loose brushwork, creating a framework to explore otherness.

Stanners' artistic evolution from abstraction to portraiture reflects his desire for greater clarity and nuanced expression. Initially drawn to the energetic, anarchic possibilities of abstraction, he now finds figurative work allows him to convey human stories and ideas better. Despite the shift, both approaches share a creative judgment and curiosity that underpin his work.

Literary influences remain a subtle yet integral part of his practice, with internal verbalisation and occasional writing playing roles in his creative process. The portraits, while realistic in appearance, are imagined fictions shaped by various influences, including magazine poses, book passages, and personal sketches. These characters, in a constant state of development, embody emotional tones and psychological moods.

Wild Life invites viewers to explore the intricate relationships between humanity, technology, and nature through Stanners' compelling visual storytelling. Each piece serves as a portal to examine the multifaceted impacts of our actions and beliefs on the world around us. Through his deliberate manipulation of realism, shadows, and perspectives, Stanners creates a sense of uncanniness and unease, encouraging multiple viewings and deeper contemplation.