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Spotlight: Fantastical Landscapes Take on Conceptual Meaning in British Artist Neil Raitt's Current Exhibition
December 14, 2022

Inspired by Bob Ross and fictitious landscapes, British painter Neil Raitt offers a new perspective on American motifs and aesthetics.

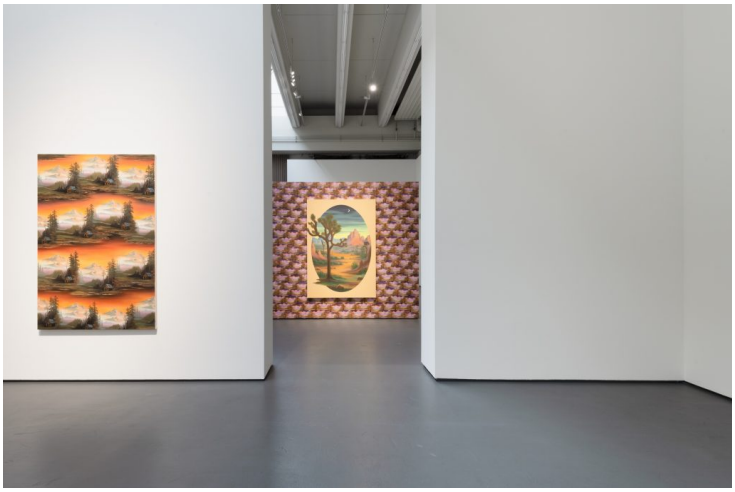
Installation view of "Neil Raitt: Tangerine Sunset" (2022). Courtesy of Galerie Judin, Berlin. Photo: Kathrin Hammer.

About the Artist: Though British artist Neil Raitt (b. 1986) lives and works in London, his work and creative vision have a decidedly American slant. Inspired by the mythos of America—and specifically the tradition and reception of hobby or outsider artists—landscapes and aesthetics from across the pond play a significant role in his work. Bob Ross of The Joy of Painting fame, in particular, has had a significant impact on Raitt's practice, with Ross's idealized style of American landscape becoming a core and repeating motif in many of his paintings. His canvases contain a unique synthesis of nostalgia, kitsch, and Americana, and offer a playful yet intellectual reflection on the means of art production today.

What You Need to Know: "Neil Raitt: Tangerine Sunset" is the artist's first solo show with Galerie Judin in Berlin, and is on view through January 21, 2023. Presenting a series of new paintings in Raitt's signature hand, the show foregrounds the riddles and whimsical incongruities that arise in his work through the repeating landscape motif: palm trees rise from snowy mountains, suns blaze in starry night skies, and, although there are frequently cabins or huts, there are never any figures inhabiting them. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue featuring an essay by curator and art historian Mark Gisbourne, who explores the conceptual underpinnings of Raitt's practice and describes the artist's work as having an inextricable element of "Romantic irony."

Neil Raitt, Rocky Glacier (Cloudy Spring) (2022). © Neil Raitt. Courtesy of Galerie Judin, Berlin.

Why We Like It: The collection of works in the show together illustrates the variety and diversity of compositions that Raitt is able to employ despite the serial nature of the images. Some canvases could be mistaken for a cutout of wallpaper, others engage with trompe-l'oeil traditions and feature a cohesive foreground through which the viewer can glimpse the hallmark landscape patterns. The result is a whimsical exploration of Raitt's own internal world and viewpoint, where recognizable scenes and subjects commingle with new and even slightly uncanny elements. Each of Raitt's works inspires prolonged looking. Even in repetitious compositions, the deviations between what at first seem to be identical vignettes (perhaps qualifying as Ross's "happy accidents"?), ranging between the pristine and the painterly, reveal the artist's hand and the subtlety of his execution.



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