

Andrew Sim

*Two pink birds with a gold nest*

May 29 – August 16, 2024

Anton Kern Gallery is pleased to announce Andrew Sim's first solo exhibition at the gallery's 55th Street location, and to officially welcome them to our artist roster.

In *Two pink birds with a gold nest*, the Scottish artist presents twelve new paintings with motifs ranging from hairless werewolves to winged horses, rainbow-colored monkey puzzle trees, and nesting birds. Through their expressive poses and otherworldly glow, these fantastical presences become vessels through which Sim expresses feelings of vulnerability, growth, and affirmation.

Sim pulls their repertoire of motifs from an unconscious place inhabited by dream images, classic archetypes, and sightings that have gained psychological significance through repeated encounters in daily life. Through the process of externalizing these images as artworks that operate in the physical realm, connections to the artist's evolving gender presentation and desire for queer placemaking reveal themselves.

Before approaching the canvas, Sim works out their images on A4 copy paper, until they possess an eternal quality separate from any personal symbolism. Once this is achieved, Sim's paintings are created in short bursts of energy. Applying pan pastels with a soft foam-tipped palette knife, the compositions come alive in a thin layer of powder that sits on top of the canvas, preserving the urgency with which they are created.

Earlier in Sim's practice they translated their images to canvas at a one-to-one ratio; their trees were tree-size and horses horse-size. In the new works, the choice in scale and cropping reflects the solidification of the artist's motifs, and underscores the emotional content of their subject matter. In the exhibition's title piece, *Two pink birds with a gold nest*, the birds are Jurassic in scale, with wings big enough to embrace the viewer. In *Portrait of two werewolves without hair with rainbows*, a pair of grinning werewolves affectionately touch noses under twin rainbows in selfie-like proximity. The expression of this couple diverges from Sim's earlier renditions of werewolves, which were tentatively postured with clenched smiles, spotlighted as if under observation. Here they greet the viewer with unapologetic confidence.

Sim also introduces compositional devices that place their subjects in new environments with a dispersed quality of light. With the addition of horizon lines, flowers, rainbows, and stars, the paintings are becoming more complex. The culmination of this is present in *Portrait of a rainbow monkey puzzle with flowers and stars*, which is a utopic scene of a young multicolored tree encircled by a bed of tulips under a star-filled sky.

It is only apparent to Sim after-the-fact that progressions in their practice coincide with landmarks in their personal narrative. In the course of creating this exhibition, winged animals came to the fore paralleling the artist's decision to move away from their hometown of Glasgow, first to London, and then to New York. Blooming plant life and nesting birds have appeared as Sim has rooted themselves in new queer communities, and set a date for their upcoming wedding. Of course, there is no prescriptive reading of the works. For Sim, successful motifs are both relatable in their encoded queerness, while also being open-ended enough for anyone to draw from their own subconscious and attach their own meaning to.