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**Ball auf der Nase**  
**Nazim Ünal Yilmaz**  
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Scenes reminiscent of Vienna's urban texture are almost unrecognisable, sinking into chaos; death is nearer than it has ever been, is more entangled to the idea of civilization and progress. Baroque architecture, a certain aesthetic which has stayed relevant and present for centuries, is crumbling down over the heads of rabbits, who rush around rubbles as if it is a playground. It might not be the end of the rabbit thanks to its sharp and quick manoeuvres; but the fate of humanity is surely as shaky as the buildings.

In his second solo show in Berlin, Nazim Ünal Yilmaz brings together paintings, most of which are new works presented for the first time, accompanied by older ones from different eras of his practice. The collection of works at PSM is like an attempt to narrate a science-fiction story, which might not associate itself to the medium of painting immediately, especially if it is a prophecy that is difficult to dismiss as pure fiction. As the catastrophes related to the climate crisis force themselves to an ever-growing proportion of the news, how can they stay out of paintings?

Some of the works are close-up scenes that one easily feels the threat of being swallowed by the canvas. As described above, in *White Rabbit!*, the animal that gives the name to the work is in a hurry, as if it tries to escape from the surface and break free as baroque ornaments and columns, which erected the imagery of nation-states and identities and we are too close to all that rambles down to ignore. As columns are shattered, one feels the danger thanks to angles Nazim relentlessly deploys in each painting. Yet, humans find a way to avoid the hard questions, even though they might have nowhere left to run, like it is depicted in *Polar Activity*.

And that avoidance is embodied by snowmen, another recurring figure in Nazim's practice. Rather than gloriously frozen and hand-crafted by the innocence of children, snowman becomes an archetype that can be considered as the personification of a class that manipulates the discourse around our shared crisis. A class that is not only the main responsible of all the crisis but also who profits from it. One that denies the existence of a crisis as long as it can, and then turns into one that offers cosmetic solutions to it and expects praise for their role. A class that is constantly at odds with what they promise, that hurts the most and heals the least. In Nazim's image- and world-making, the melting of snowmen is nothing less than joyous.

Nazim does not only go after the hypocrisy of the ruling elite of today; he delves deeper into the history and complicates the first of us who has fallen in love with himself: Narcissus. Leaning upon the water and seeing his face for the first time, Narcissus instantly becomes attracted to the face he sees on the water without knowing who it is. Like him, humanity is in the same track, burning by a desire to discover what they are capable of, how they can come on top in their struggle to rule nature.

Standing on their two feet might have been the curse that doomed humanity from the very start as hinted in *Reptile* and *Two Options for Narcissus*. This is also where the figure of a painter in the shape of Nazim comes to the picture; he does not shy away from reflecting on his own image, his own standing up, his positionality, and what his artistic practice would mean given the circumstances of today, both socially and politically.

Yet, the reflection does not occur by itself. A source of light is needed; an omnipotent one that can be our ultimate source of life: the sun. The source that can accommodate the conditions for all living things to be born; however, the sun can be just as deadly thanks to each narcissus among us and how we – snowmen the most – mistreat the irreplicable treasure. In *Dominating the Sun*, a pair of feet are reaching towards the star on what seems to be a summer day, framing the sun as if it is there only to heat and comfort them. The toes are pulling the mouth of the sun to each side of it, stretching it almost to its limits. Does the sun have to smile and join the crowd as if everything is fine? All these figures and their uses, along with others like horses, bring together a personal iconography that Nazim has accumulated, giving us points of reference to reflect on ourselves.

Then again, neither history nor referencing is a one-sided concern for the artist: he also tasks himself with tackling the issue of citing in another way. Trying to label his paintings with a certain style or school is as difficult as it is unnecessary: he paints scenes over scenes, one painting more often than now employing techniques that remind different schools of painting, from abstraction to surrealism and more. Hence it would be a mistake to try to pin him down to one of these in singularity but the paintings are an invitation to recognise the citations, find the playful shifts and transitions from one to the other not only from painting to the other, but also within the same surface.

In a constellation of familiar figures, *Ball auf der Nase* weaves concepts and styles to urgent questions that are open-ended, rather than posing certain answers. Nazim's sense of humour still leaves us with some hope, a core feeling spreads across the exhibition. In the end, one cannot help but wonder: will I be able to shower my feet with the sunlight again without thinking about all of this?

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