

Max Xeno Karnig

The Cardsharps

March 26 - April 11

59 Amwell Street, EC1R 1UR, London

Samuele Visentin is pleased to present *The Cardsharps* - the first solo show by Max Xeno Karnig in the United Kingdom. The exhibition is presented at 59 Amwell Street in London, UK and comprises 11 artworks.

In *The Cardsharps*, Max Xeno Karnig paints still-life subjects and reimagined cinema icons with a double-sided formalism. The paintings are full of exact, lifelike details but there is an underlying artificiality in every form. The concept of *camp* results essential in understanding the sensibility of the artist: artifice, exaggeration and the various characteristics of mannerism shape his subjects as much as any mimetic impulse.

Each figure portrays film characters that endeavour to deceive and be deceived, often by erotic means. A stripped Catherine Deneuve as Séverine in *Belle de Jour* (1967) turns her gaze towards the viewer from behind her shoulder in an act of erotic defiance, while the eyes of Silvia (Penelope Cruz) in *Jamon Jamon* (1993) look far in the distance behind us, dreamily and mindlessly, framed by long thick eyelashes.

The subjects at the centre of *The Cardsharps* flirt with allusions to archetypal forms, winking at compositions of historical paintings. The portrait of a recognisable cinema star displays a bust length reminiscent of the framing of Antonello da Messina's portraits or the distorted anatomies of Bronzino and Ingres. The same applies to the anatomy of his still-life objects: the fruits displayed structurally resemble the original subjects painted from life, but their final appearance obeys a diverse degree of abstraction, ideal form and purified colour.

Max Xeno Karnig (b. 1990 in New York, NY) lives and works between Los Angeles and Berkeley, California). He received a BA in both art history and studio art from the University of California, San Diego and an MFA from the University of California, Irvine.