

Raffi Kalenderian To Walk Through the Night

October 31 – December 19, 2015

For his fourth solo show at Peter Kilchmann TO WALK THROUGH THE NIGHT, Raffi Kalenderian uses portraiture and for the first time also landscape painting, to register an expansive vision of nocturnal Los Angeles. To achieve this, Kalenderian presents in this exhibition around 30 new works, among them 20 paintings on canvas and 10 paper works.

His subjects are once again his friends and family, individuals depicted inhabiting their own singular existence. Poets, playwrights, starlets and painters are isolated figures evoking an introspective sensitivity, untouched by Southern California's monolithic sunshine. By negotiating representation with the fictional space that night can lend itself to, Kalenderian's sceneries reveal an LA unified by hypnotic darkness, as a quality and a metaphysic process. The landscapes appear as if poisoned by their own forms, activated by abstraction and freedom, and packed with intense marks and inverted colors (white on black). These are not the pastoral landscapes of an idealized natural world – they are in their own way a reckoning of environments that are impacted by crisis. Gardens and landscapes were already an important part of Kalenderian's early works, yet always as background scenarios. Landscapes as independent themes can be therefor viewed as a new element of his oeuvre.

The work *Landscape (Huntington Gardens)* (2013-2015, oil on canvas, 152 x 203 cm, see invitation card) can be understood in this context. The scene with white palms on a black grounding and different colors sparkling through the darkness, develops a dynamic of its own, which makes the viewer loose himself in the rhythm of its brush strokes, shapes and layers of paint, rather than the first figurative encounter with a landscape. The image is somber, abstract and determined. Just as with the people in his portraits, Kalenderian breathes a character and an aura into his landscapes, inspiring an aesthetic experience.

Kalenderian's approach to painting entails a kind of reverence for process. In this body of work, space bends, brush marks dissolve images, and darkness is built-up in layers, creating moments where painting's mechanisms are the real subject. As his canvases become dense with paint and wax, they incarnate compositions that evoke their own ghosts. This generates a way of painting as excavation, as Kalenderian utilizes the palette knife to scrape through, to reveal drawings, underpaintings and previous versions of his subjects and himself. The paintings become as much about themselves as they are about the memory of their material process. They stand as unfolding scenes or moments that reveal to the viewer an experience of search, trust and uncertainty implicit in image making. Kalenderian's methods are attentive to a tradition of chance and faith, heeding the advice of Rainer Maria Rilke: "We must assume our existence as broadly as we in any way can; everything, even the unheard of, must be possible in it. That is at bottom the only courage that is demanded of us: to have courage for the most strange, the most singular, and the most inexplicable that we may encounter."

Born in 1981 in Los Angeles, California, Raffi Kalenderian completed his studies in painting at the University of California under the professorship of Laura Owens. Kalenderian's works have been on display in different solo and group exhibitions throughout Europe and the USA. In 2010 the catalog "Memoranda" was published on the occasion of his solo exhibition at Galerie Peter Kilchmann.