



Marc Henry

Theorie der feinen Leute

12.09. - 19.10.2025

opening 11.09. 6-9 pm

The title of Marc Henry's solo exhibition *Theory of the Fine People* at Galerie Anton Janizewski refers to Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, first published in 1899. The American economist describes here the mechanism of conspicuous consumption, in which luxury goods function as markers of social distinction. Clothing, architecture, and art – all serve as visible codes of separation for the “leisure class”.

Henry's paintings take up these codes and translate them into pictorial spaces that appear familiar yet verge on the surreal. Elegant interiors, modernist buildings, or burning architectural models provide the setting. Figures inhabit these spaces like stage characters – more archetypes than individuals – their rigid gazes recalling Edward Hopper. Some scenes resemble snapshots of everyday familiarity, while others are charged with subtle tension: figures wear glasses or leather gloves that create a sense of distance, and artificial lighting heightens the impression of theatrical staging. Central to Henry's work is the play between model and reality. He constructs digital collages from an archive of photographs, architectural fragments, private snapshots, and found footage from the internet. The architectures are composed of mid-century motifs – glass facades, open floor plans, design classics – which establish familiar codes without making direct references. Printed in A3 format, these

collages serve as templates in which scenarios are tested and arranged in advance.

Transferred onto canvas layer by layer – on coarse linen whose texture imposes a certain loss of control, reminiscent of the grain of analog film. Figures take on a peculiar rigidity, and the paintings resemble stills.

The works appear staged – and they are meant to. In *The Architects II*, for instance, two figures lie beside a burning model, the tragedy of a prestige project condensed into a single scene. This is intensified by a cinematic light, at times almost Lynchian. Yet on closer inspection, the light betrays the illusion: shadows fall unnaturally, spaces are overexposed – an effect that makes them appear like dream sequences.

The series reflects on painting itself – its role as a medium of representation, power, and wealth – while at the same time responding to the fleeting image flows of the digital world from which Henry draws. Elements of 1960s style blend with contemporary details, making the scenes hard to pin down in time and deliberately staged, leaving an undercurrent of unease. In this tension between the shiny layers of oil paint and the fleeting nature of digital loops, painting reads as a metaphor for Veblen's theory of „conspicuous consumption“.

As Mark Fisher observed, in late capitalism critique can hardly detach itself from the very structures it criticizes. *Theory of the Fine People* makes this contradiction visible: it is never quite clear whether one is looking at the model or already at the building itself. And perhaps it is for that very reason that, eventually, it all goes up in flames.

- Tabea Marshall