

## Luka Kurashvili: Shouting quiet moments

Opening Friday October 6, 5-9pm (kl. 17-21) | Exhibition period: October 7 - November 11, 2023

In Georgian artist Luka Kurashvili's first solo exhibition in the gallery, he shows large scale paintings where strong contrasting colors set the mood for everyday scenes of deep conversations and social situations. Despite their elaborate nature, the works have a quiet, sensitive feeling about them as they zoom in on small character groups sharing intimate moments in abstract environments reminiscent of bars, elevators, and street corners.

By only gesturing to a set architecture, landscape and space, Kurashvili's work makes the eye zoom in on the relations - the characters' particular gestures and body language, and on oddly added objects. There are wine glasses, thrown empty bottles, plastic cups and a banana peel, lots of cigarettes and animals running free – all props that give the works characteristics and the feeling of impermanence, like the moment could be missed if we do not pay close attention. In one painting, *Yellow bar* (2023), a man wearing sunglasses (inside) while smoking a cigarette, approaches the woman bartender, all while leaning his arm on top of another man's head. The absurdity and arrogance of the scene takes a while to sink in, as the act takes up very little space of the frame – an image of how invisible social power dynamics can seem in real life. In this, as in most of Kurashvili's work, the viewer is a quiet voyeur, standing at the end of the bar, letting the scene play out. This way of storytelling about moments that are both shouting and quiet, can be traced to how Kurashvili works and gathers material. With his sketchbook and camera, he is always ready to catch the fleeting, subtle everyday, but important moments that tell us much about the human experience. A special viewpoint and perspective that we are happy Kurashvili shares with us all in the gallery.

Working from his knowledge of the film industry, having grown up on film sets where both his parents worked, Kurashvili compose his paintings as a filmmaker would direct a scene, building them up from both abstract and recognisable material; from his memories, imagination, from his close studies of western 19-20 century painters and from photographs of his everyday life across Tbilisi and Düsseldorf. In some ways, this makes the paintings seem familiar, as the viewer can trace characters or elements from one work to another, and on the other aspects of our everyday life is enhanced and caricatured.

When creating the scene, Kurashvili is highly aware of the importance and influence of color – how this paints the mood and feeling of the work. Having always looked to the western painters, Kurashvili's use of contrasting and luminating reds, blues, whites and yellows, could make one think of the teachings of 20th century Bauhaus master Wassily Kandinsky. His theory looked to the early Greek masters and contemporary psychology, who understood colors as relating to the four elements and the senses. For instance, with Kurashvili's bar paintings *Yellow bar* and *Blue bar* (2023), Kandinsky's theory would state that yellow is as sour and bitter as a lemon, leaning out towards the viewer, whereas blue has the highest spirituality, and recedes into the frame. This theory seems to correspond with Kurashvili's work, as the struggle between participating in the social scene fights the need for inward reflection and the safety of observing from a distance. However, Kurashvili also tells us that the colors refer to his memory of the actual colors of the barstools and nightclub lights where he worked when first moving to Düsseldorf. What is most important for Kurashvili is the freedom of the intuitively and surprising painterly process, where the material, oil especially, has a life of its own and new color schemes and stories arise organically.

# Wilson Saplana

**Luka Kurashvili** (b. 1985, Tbilisi, Georgia) has an MFA from the Düsseldorf Art Academy (2008-2010), and from the Royal Academy of London (2015, exchange). He has exhibited at Basel Social Club, Basel, Switzerland (2023), NotFor\$ale, Basel, Switzerland (2023), Praxis, Basel, Switzerland, Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany (2022), Kunstraum am rhein DCKD e.V.Düsseldorf, Germany.(2016) and Weltkunstzimmer, Düsseldorf, Germany.