

SASKIA NEUMAN GALLERY

Jonas Nobel

Seducing Birds and Humans

01.10 – 31.10.2026

Throughout his practice, Jonas Nobel's collages, paintings, drawings and sculptures have periodically seemed to have been inspired by mass production and industrial representation. A statement often read in conjecture with Nobel's work. This is a fallacy. Although the contents of various works may appear slightly absurd and can bring "impossible shapes" to mind, or "degenerate images" as they are also called, the artist's work is in almost all aspects completely organic. The internal contradictions in the objects found in the paintings and sculptures themselves in the exhibition *Seducing Birds and Humans* form the foundation of a complex innominate object.

Painting, the camera, 3D scanning and AI are all techniques for creating representations. Nobel has examined the story of Zeuxis and Parrhasius and the myth of Pygmalion. Going back to these early sources is one way of establishing a grounded framework for his practice. The artist describes the work in the studio as completely free, without restraint or daily hindrance, and therefore the need for a certain containment and structure via various articulated frameworks allows the artist to steer his artmaking in a particular direction. Thus, the myths and stories become and are a fundamental component of his methodology, rather than merely illustrations.

In the studio, Nobel defined the opposite of Artificial Intelligence as Authentic Intuition, and worked accordingly — intuitively, associatively and through steadfast decision-making. The materials are chosen on the basis that the artist can work quickly and does not need to have excessive respect for the material initially. If something develops in a way that Nobel doesn't appreciate, or disappoints, he discards the object, or saws it off, possibly attaching a new piece of wood or another material. This continuous evaluation is repetitive, taking place throughout the entire process.

Both the myth of Zeuxis and Parrhasius and that of Pygmalion unfold in the studio simultaneously. The pedestals presented in the exhibition, made by the artist, hold great meaning; they have similarities to tools and equipment from classical sculpture studios. They specifically draw from Jean-Léon Gérôme's 1890 painting *Pygmalion and Galatea*: a small stepladder, a chevalet and a box with handles.

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Both myths are concerned with creating presence — either by deceiving the viewer into believing that a presence exists where there is actually only a painting, or by creating what you desire and giving it “life.” Nobel is investigating why and how an abstract form can be experienced as more present than another. Could it be that it always has something to do with figuration? One thing resembles something else, and therefore acquires presence. Or perhaps something begins to slip within abstraction, and resembles many things simultaneously, gaining its presence precisely through this shifting.

The colours used in both the sculptures and paintings throughout the exhibition are inspired by the classical concept of the studio as a physical and historical place: a kind of inward-looking, decadent still-life painting, filled with an abundance of fruits and berries in dark rooms, without a clear view to the outside. The colours of the sculptures alternate between glossy and matte surfaces, causing them to move between reflection, radiance and absorption — between openness and enclosure. As a distinct counterpoint and contrast to wood sculpture and paintings, Nobel has also included three renderings of the sculptures that are situated in the inner room of the gallery. The sculptures have been photogrammetrically 3D-scanned and then rendered.

Nobel employs recognisable materials in these sculptures, putting together elements with different historical connotations and, in doing so, creating new ones. The objects carry both great agency and urgency. There is no rest. It is human consciousness that assigns value and fields of application to them. It is at this intersection, at the junction between the idea and the embodiment of work, that art history finds its own field of application — one in which meaning is created. Nobel's sculptures employ topical or historical incidents, with several precise references, while still making space for all forms of association. These personal associations form new structures within the context of the observer, leading to our ability to create links beyond what we are seeing, and perhaps providing the possibility for reflection on the political or social events that affect our daily lives.

Jonas Nobel (b. 1970) is a Swedish artist based in Stockholm. He received his MFA from the Umeå Academy of Fine Arts in 1998 and is the co-founder of the creative collective *Uglycute*—an innovative group working across art, design and architecture. *Seducing Birds and Humans* is his first solo exhibition at Saskia Neuman Gallery.

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