

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Vincent Haynes
'ZEREMONIELL'

16 November – 21 December 2024
Kurfürstentstraße 156, Berlin

Tanya Leighton, Berlin is pleased to present 'Zeremoniell', featuring new paintings by Bremen-based artist Vincent Haynes. The exhibition – whose title translates to *ceremonial* in English – alludes to a subject that has long fascinated the artist, namely the rituals of statecraft that set the stage for political performance. Familiar examples include occasions like military parades, national addresses, or award ceremonies, but Haynes's work moves beyond easily recognizable modes of propaganda to meditate on the more banal sites of performative messaging, such as the moment a head of state exits a summit, a dignitary delivers remarks at a banquet, or an official poses for a photo op in front of a lectern. Put differently, Haynes's work studies the leitmotifs of political theater, the recurrent devices that convey certain ideas whether one readily recognizes a given ceremony's purpose.

For Haynes, the vast majority of political life is just a myriad of stock procedures and settings for people to fill as stand-ins. The mood of each painting implies a recognition that there exist hidden loci of power that the machinations of political performance obscure, and more importantly that this fact is about revelatory as letting the world know that water is wet. This gloomy sentiment is underscored by the relative anonymity of the artist's subjects. Haynes makes scarcely any attempt at individualizing his figures, thereby emphasizing their role as placeholders in an economy of signs. It might be said, then, that the paintings in 'Zeremoniell' are a kind of political portraiture without people. Indeed, the artist's palette, full of muddied greens and reds as well as muted beiges, conveys a world deliberately sapped of vitality, as if desolate and vacant. It is as if Haynes's subjects know they are nobody *in particular*.

In discussing the genesis of his work, Haynes remarks upon the sense of "weird melancholia" he intuits when watching state officials on television, believing that "dignitaries know they are just interchangeable figures." He recalls that his fascination with the performance of statecraft began as a young boy watching television. The ability to switch from channel to channel, seamlessly moving from cartoons, to music videos, to live broadcasts of war zones in an instant, left the young artist with a preoccupation with TV's dissociative power. The screen's allure would become a lifelong object of contemplation. In the present, operating somewhat like a semiotician, Haynes has carried this longstanding interest in mass media into a critical investigation into the visual minutiae of empire – the etiquette of its empty platitudes and mind-numbing unction. Dissociating from the pull of such pomp, Hayne's work aims to restructure the way one sees power in the political.

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Vincent Haynes (born 1989, Bremen, Germany) lives and works in Bremen.

Haynes received his Diploma from the University of the Arts Bremen in 2018 and his MFA from the University of Chicago in 2021. He is the recipient of the prestigious Georg-Meistermann-Stipendium.

His solo exhibitions include Ackerman Clarke, Chicago in 2023; 'politics' at Künstlerstätte Stuhr/Heiligenrode, Stuhr, Germany in 2022; 'castrum doloris' at Galerie Feiertag, Kassel in 2021. Haynes's work has been part of group exhibitions at Museum Weserburg, Bremen; Kunstverein Lüneburg, Germany; GAK - Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst, Bremen; Logan Center Gallery, Chicago; Junction Hall, Detroit; Belong Gallery, Chicago; myanmart/artsake, Yangon, Myanmar and 934 Gallery, Columbus, Ohio, among others.

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The gallery is open Wednesday to Saturday, 1–6 pm and by appointment.