



NO THANKS

ARTWORK BY
RHYS ZIEMBA

SEPT. 9 - OCT. 1, 2023

OPENING RECEPTION:
SATURDAY, SEPT. 9TH, 4-8PM

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KIPNZ is pleased to announce *NO THANKS*, an exhibition of still life and landscape paintings by Rhys Ziemba, who describes his subjects as “real things that aren’t really happening.”

As part of his practice, Ziemba assembles diorama-like scenes in his basement studio – composed of everyday objects such as mannequin parts, clothing, traffic cones, tupperware bins, garbage, skeleton forms and plastic cups – and renders them faithfully in oil paint. This dark theater of discarded ephemera has recently begun to populate vivid landscapes, sometimes urban, where the artist lives, but mostly natural environments including the beaches and deep horizons of Florida, where he grew up.

To look at Ziemba’s works – seemingly arbitrary objects and symbols crowding the foreground and disturbing the view – is to be prompted. You want to keep looking. The paintings themselves are quiet but are brimming with language. Layers upon layers of references and narratives are shown as heaps in a landscape but their meaning is held in suspension. For Ziemba, assembling meaning is something rife with playful contradiction, something which nevertheless carries significant philosophical weight. “I paint nature even though I don’t believe in nature.”

This paradox among these visual signs is underscored in the fantastical elements of Ziemba’s paintings. Floating witches’ hats, cartoon eyeballs, feet and objects are suspended in space like the parlor tricks of early photography. Self-

described “gimmicks,” these motifs negate, confuse and undermine any impulse to lay meaning or hierarchy to what is being seen.

“There’s a wonderful image I first got in my head when I read Caetano Veloso’s book, *Tropical Truth*, many years ago: culture itself as a big trash heap with layers and layers of junk piled on top of each other, intermingling, stuff staining other stuff, bits poking out, all of it determining the topography for everything deposited later. It’s like a metaphor that describes itself. I’d like to dissolve the distinction between the thing being rendered and the rendering. The act of littering in the world and “littering” oil paint on a painting become the same thing.”

Woven into the humor and absurdity of these works is Ziemba’s sincerity. Despite the deliberate “littering” of these scenes, Ziemba remains interested in the specificity of the objects and arrangements depicted: scrub oak branches, brick stacks, magnolias, sandy dunes, dumpsters, pitchforks, gloves and shoes. Each thing is real. Each environment is real. And real things can confuse us.

Rhys Ziemba (born 1981) is a musician and artist. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife Elizabeth Lopiccolo and two cats.

For press inquiries, please contact Kenneth Pietrobono and Natalie Zayne at info@kipnz.com.

Image: *New Coastal Mountain, 2023*. Oil on panel, 20 x 24 inches.

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