



Antone Könst: In a Sea of Nothing

September 6 – October 28, 2023
Opening reception: September 6th, 6 – 8 PM

Tilton Gallery is delighted to present *Antone Könst: In a Sea of Nothing*, an exhibition of new paintings depicting flowers, animals, and figures. This is Antone Könst's second solo show with Tilton. The exhibition will be on view from September 6 through October 28, 2023. A reception for the artist will take place Wednesday, September 6th from 6:00 to 8:00PM.

In a Sea of Nothing comprises a group of figurative paintings depicting subjects from the natural world. These subjects are universally familiar - flowers, animals and figures; however, they are not specific. The flowers are not of a specific strain, the animals are not of a particular breed. The human figures are recognizable as musicians or painters; yet they are not specific individuals. They express just enough of themselves to convey what they are. This ambiguity and anonymity allow for a direct and deep expression of emotion that is portrayed in paint through soft, strong, smooth, and rough brushstrokes.

Instinctual emotions of desire and isolation are always present. In the group of flower paintings, desire is manifest in the movement of each flower. They come to life as they strive for sustenance and reach into the world around them, animated from stem to stamen. Rising out of their vases, they strain upwards and outwards, held up by their thin stems. These supports convey strength in their angular joints, and grace in their soft, swooping arcs. Each petal is unique, with a structure and color unto itself. Budding petals burst forward in bold colors and sharp forms. Wilting petals recede into shade in cool colors and drooping shapes. At the center of the petals, stippled dabs of paint appear as seeds, pregnant with color and life. These diverse elements and flowers come together as cohesive bouquets. The cacophony of colors and forms express a multitude of emotions all felt at once.

The ambiguous animals and anonymous figures express a similar range of emotions but in a more singular form of a lone animal or human. The image of a lion conjures notions of strength and violence. Yet, here the lion appears cautious and tender, its head bowed and shoulders hunched. Its usual, statuesque posture as an aggressor or guardian is called into question as the lion lets butterflies land on its muscular body. In *Dancer with Flutes*, a figure plays two flutes at once while dancing. Her jaunty frame has the range of a musical score; her elbows and knees are emphatically angular, yet her limbs are draped in a flowing garment adorned with soft circles of color.

While these subjects all appear large and push towards the edges of the canvas, their size is undermined by the ground on which they stand. This ground is most often a grid, receding into an ambiguous depth. The unknown expanse expresses the simultaneous smallness of the figures and a certain angst creeps in. The large figures begin to feel isolated. The grid is at once familiar and foreign. It could be the domestic surface of a bathroom or kitchen floor or a playful site like a checkerboard, but without any further context it remains uncertain. The binary, geometric nature of the grid may now be more familiar as a virtual surface, an infinite digital setting. Hovering above the grid circular forms appear, recognizable as suns or moons rising or setting off in the distance or perhaps orbiting planets floating nearby. These orbs transport the figures even further from a knowable setting. Set in an empty and endless landscape, these solitary subjects begin to feel almost absurd.

The title of the exhibition, *In a Sea of Nothing*, references this seeming absurdity. Despite the absence around them, these figures have a presence and purpose. They exist and act in an unknown and isolated world. The musicians keep playing without an audience. The lion steps forward bracing towards an unknown. The flowers continue to bloom. These subjects have been painted for millennia, yet they persist. There is still something new to be expressed and felt.

Antone Könst was born in 1987 in New Haven, Connecticut. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He received his BFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 2011 and his MFA from the Yale School of Art in 2014. He has exhibited widely across the United States and abroad, with recent exhibitions in New York, Taipei, Aspen, Los Angeles, and Paris. In 2018, Könst was awarded the Socrates Sculpture Park Emerging Artist Fellowship. Recent public art commissions include Lighthouse Works, NY, and Socrates Sculpture Park, NY. His work is included in the collections of the X Museum, Beijing, China; Jorge Perez Collection Miami/promised gift to Pérez Art Museum Miami, Florida; and the Deji Art Museum, Nanjing, China.