

ENGLISH

DEC 4, 2023 — MAY 5, 2024

# Hernan Bas

# The Conceptualists

# HERNAN BAS: THE CONCEPTUALISTS



Hernan Bas, *Conceptual artist #32 (a conceptual purist, his work requires a willing ear to evidence the ideas he conjures at the Absinthe Bar)*, 2023. Acrylic and water-based oil on linen. 108 × 168 in. Courtesy of Ostillo Art Foundation, Austin, Texas.

In his paintings, drawings and installations, Hernan Bas (b. 1978, Miami, FL) creates intricately detailed scenes inviting viewers to decipher a complex range of visual references. His works often portray a single or group of male figures caught in a moment of introspection or repose while the surrounding action appears suspended, allowing both the artist and viewers to contemplate the scene.

Bas incorporates visual cues—and hidden clues—from a multitude of sources: poetry, literature, the history

of gay struggle, youth culture, news media and television, among others. While his earlier works show various cultural figures linked to specific narratives, Bas takes a broader swipe at artistic output in *The Conceptualists*, wielding his interests in conceptual art within (and against) a traditional painting practice. The paintings in the exhibition—thirty-five in total—depict imagined conceptual artists, or *protagonists*, engaged in obsessive, idiosyncratic pastimes. These conceptualists freely exercise unique activities that give sustenance and





Hernan Bas, *Conceptual artist #8 (land-based and intentionally ephemeral, his work aided by a trusted bag of food coloring elevates rural puddles)*, 2022. Acrylic on linen. 72 × 60 in. Courtesy of Tony Hui Cao and Xiaoxi Li.

meaning to their lives: mixing paint with water sourced exclusively from the Niagara Falls, chewing gum every waking hour of the day, gilding the leaves of dying house plants, composing music with the aid of dowsing rods and so forth.

Anchoring the exhibition, the largest painting (at nine-by-twenty-one feet) depicts an artist who paints conceptual artists. Its scale and composition recall allegorical works by figures like Gustave Courbet and David Hockney, whose paintings

challenged ideas of representation and illusionism in the art of their respective moments. Unlike his predecessors, Bas rejects any one established or straightforward approach, thus embracing the multiplicities, ambiguities and anxieties of our own time. Here, his pictorial gathering is composed of the young lads whom viewers have only just met in the exhibition's other works. The act of viewing, therefore, transforms the allegory into an immediate experience—no need to wait for time to pass, or art history to interpret and take hold.

# HERNAN BAS: THE CONCEPTUALISTS

## UPCOMING EVENT

MAR 30, 2024

1-2 PM

Curator Culture: Isabelle Graw in conversation with Hernan Bas

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*Hernan Bas: The Conceptualists* is curated by Dr. James Voorhies, Curator of The Bass. This exhibition is presented with support by PHILLIPS. Additional support is provided by Fredric Snitzer Gallery; Galerie Peter Kilchmann Zurich, Paris; Lehmann Maupin New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London; PERROTIN and Victoria Miro. Photography by Silvia Ros. Images courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London.

## PHILLIPS

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# THE BASS

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Cover: Hernan Bas, *Conceptual artist #32 (a conceptual purist, his work requires a willing ear to evidence the ideas he conjures at the Absinthe Bar)* (detail), 2023. Acrylic and water-based oil on linen, 108 x 168 in. Courtesy of Ostillo Art Foundation, Austin, Texas.