

Lora Reynolds
Gallery

1126 West Sixth Street
Austin Texas 78703

512 215 4965
info@lorareynolds.com

lorareynolds.com
@lorareynoldsgallery

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARL HAMMOUD

Mise en Abyme
2.21.25 – 4.26.25

Lora Reynolds is pleased to announce *Mise en Abyme*, an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Carl Hammoud—the artist's fifth project with the gallery.

When Carl Hammoud started painting for this show, he did not yet know how many images he would make or what they would depict—a simple departure from his usual mode, but a significant one. For every previous body of work he has ever made, he spent much of his time collecting images, combining and organizing them, considering how they related to one another, choosing a color palette—all before sharpening a drawing pencil or opening a single tube of paint. With *Mise en Abyme*, Hammoud made a point to avoid thinking prescriptively. He opened himself to receiving new ideas while making the show and he let himself chase them. He did not begin with a thesis. Rather, he stepped straight into the unknown of a bottomless stack of blank panels and trusted some connective thread would lead him to the next image he needed to make.

The resulting constellation of paintings and drawings bring together subjects he has never approached before (a tree, the sea, a pile of leaves) with others he has returned to again and again (a mosh of chairs, clean white sheets of paper swirling through the air, a copse of blank books). All of the work is small and precisely rendered. Some are grayscale, some color. Far from ending up

disjointed or scattershot, when taken as a whole, the new exhibition conjures an existential roiling undoubtedly familiar to anyone who has raised kids or felt overwhelmed by an endless list of tedious chores or spent any time at all staring up at the stars on a particularly dark night.

Smoke and Mirrors is a graphite drawing of the crown of a leafless tree. Its writhing trunk and branches undulate just a little outside the bounds of normalcy. The drawing represents a tree that lives outside Hammoud's apartment, seen through its old wavy glass windows.

Fair Winds and Following Seas is a churning, stormy oceanscape with a tonal range like a bruise. Hammoud built the image from pieces of several 19th-century paintings of shipwrecks. The title of the work is a mariner's toast of good luck.

Mr. Robert's Predicament is a pair of paintings (one in color, one black and white) that each portray four wooden doors in doorframes. The design of each door is staid, but their uncanny relationships to each other and their surroundings suggest we are more likely looking at a theatrical set or an anxiety dream than the interior of a home. Like a folding screen, each doorframe is butted up against its neighbor and slightly askew. The door handles, oddly, are at slightly different heights. One door appears to be wide open, but the negative space it leaves in its frame is too small for anything but the narrowest peek at a dusky horizon behind.

Two paintings share the title *Counter Cartography*: a grisaille and chaotic jumble of chairs (a recurring motif in Hammoud's work) finds new resonance when paired with a pile of autumnal leaves. The black-and-white painting seems to be looking toward the past—where Hammoud has been, what he already knows—while the painting in color gazes in the opposite direction. Ahead. Fallen leaves, gloriously golden for only the shortest of whiles, point to the coming winter. Hammoud has managed to immortalize a fleeting precious moment, even if only in a quiet glowing mêlée of leaves.

Mise en Abyme, the show's titular three-part drawing, is a look over Hammoud's eight-year-old daughter Astrid's shoulder while she is using a pencil to draw herself into being—six identical times. Hammoud says he thinks of the piece as a self-portrait—of

himself drawing himself drawing. But it is also an image of an adoring father delighting in watching his daughter become more of herself while simultaneously—desperately—trying to slow down the passage of time. "Sometimes I mourn what's coming. She's growing up," he says.

Mise en Abyme asks big questions. What is real? What is important? How does one survive the "day in day out...[of] boredom, routine, and petty frustration" that David Foster Wallace described as comprising "whole, large parts of adult life that nobody talks about"? For Hammoud, it's his daughter. She is changing the fabric of his being. Teaching him to open his eyes and heart as wide as he can. To feel the feelings. Live in this moment. Let the wind take over. Bringing this new disposition with him into the studio has animated his already heady work with a novel emotional charge. Fatherhood, it turns out, gives new weight to staring out into the sea.

Swedish artist Carl Hammoud was born in 1976 and lives and works in Stockholm. He has exhibited extensively in Scandinavia, having mounted solo shows at the Eskilstuna Konstmuseum (Sweden), Gothenburg Museum of Art (Sweden), Kalmar Art Museum (Sweden), and Malmö Art Museum (Sweden). He has participated in group shows at institutions including the Borås Museum of Modern Art (Sweden), Bohusläns Museum (Sweden), Hangaram Art Museum (South Korea), Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Liljevalchs (Stockholm), Magasin III Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art (Stockholm), Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Trafo Kunsthall (Oslo), Turku Art Museum (Finland), and Ystads Konstmuseum (Sweden). His work is included in the collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo), Apotekets Konstförening (Sweden), British Museum (London), Eskilstuna Konstmuseum, Gothenburg Museum of Art, Läns museet Gävleborg (Sweden), Magasin III Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art, Malmö Art Museum, Moderna Museet (Stockholm), Östergötlands Museum (Sweden), Sammlung Frieder Burda (Germany), and Scheringa Museum (Netherlands). In 2019 he was elected as a new member to the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts.