

### **Utopia**

Heath West

January 11 – February 15, 2020

Opening Reception: Saturday, January 11, 5:30-8:00pm.

Los Angeles-based artist Heath West presents a new series of paintings in *Utopia*, his third solo exhibition with the gallery. The work advances the conceptual basis for West's long-standing architectural subject matter in his largest paintings to date. Created in a range of bold, monochromatic palettes, these architectural portraits of unique locations point to a bygone era of architectural design that has been lost with the rise of ideals fostered under late capitalism. West rejects these new values, creating paintings that offer aspirational alternatives.

Speaking in terms of architecture and urban design, accepted capitalism is synonymous with corporate modernism, a global design trend predictable for its value-engineered material palettes and economical proportions. In the building industry, the architect's function has often been reduced to that of a contractor offering only the basest of services (construction drawings), while the clients (corporations, developers) assume the role of project designer, making all visual environments into a business opportunity. Design complacency is a dangerous pastime, where the only remedy is a vision of Utopia, a place in the future filled with hope.

Interestingly enough, the paintings in *Utopia* look to the past. West interprets a number of landmark architectural projects from the 20th century in his characteristic, linear manner. A composition in black and white, *Laubenganghaus* (2019), depicts the romantic vision of Hans Scharoun found in a Berlin apartment block from the late 1920s. *Kubuswoningen* (2019) presents the almost impossibly geometric structure of Piet Blom's 1970s "cube houses" built in Rotterdam. Known for their emphasis on material and form, the 1931 Paris collaboration between Bernard Bijvoet and Pierre Chareau is found in *Maison de Verre (Dark Red)* (2019). Each varying in geographic location and date of construction, the buildings are gathered together through the boundary-pushing values that generated their design. With principles including an emphasis on honesty of materials and the optimization of space beyond that of commercial interests, these sites speak to the Utopia that West sets out to forge.

Derived from the Greek, translated literally as "nowhere", Utopia is a fictional place often located in a dream or in a memory. Through paintings that focus on volumes of solid color and varying line weights, the artist creates spaces with a discernible atmosphere. In the process, Heath West transforms specific locales into places with an otherworldly aura.

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**Heath West** (b. 1976, Houston) lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent solo exhibitions include *The Cabin* (Los Angeles, 2018), *Dillon Kyle Architects* (Houston, 2018), and *Galleri Urbane* (Dallas, 2018). His work has also appeared in group shows with *GIFC/Velvet Ropes* (Copenhagen and NYC, 2018 and 2019), *0-0.LA* (Los Angeles, 2017), and *Harper's Books* (East Hampton, 2016). His paintings have been featured in the recent publications of *Friend of the Artist* (2018), *Grapefruit Magazine* (2018), and *Anxy* (2018), along with online articles in *It's Nice That* (2019), and *A Series of Rooms* (2019). West is also a recipient of the 2017 grant in painting from The Peter S. Reed Foundation.