

# VENUS OVER MANHATTAN

Press Release

## SETH BECKER: A BOY'S HEAD

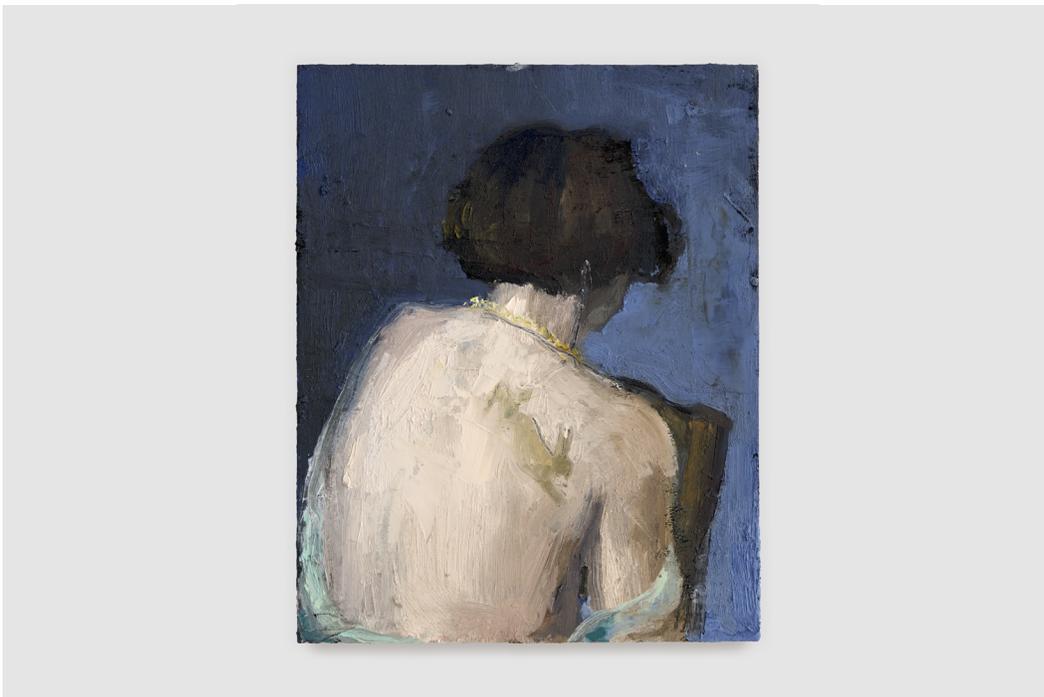
February 1 – March 9, 2024

Opening: Thursday, February 1st, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Venus Over Manhattan

39 Great Jones Street

New York, NY 10012



(New York, NY) – **Venus Over Manhattan** is pleased to present **A Boy's Head**, an exhibition of new paintings by **Seth Becker**. The presentation marks the artist's debut solo exhibition in New York City, and the gallery's inaugural solo presentation of his work. Borrowing its title from a poem by Miroslav Holub, *A Boy's Head* follows Becker's participation in the gallery's 2022 exhibition *Small Paintings*. Venus Over Manhattan will publish a small catalogue in conjunction with the exhibition, which will be on view from February 1st through March 9th at 39 Great Jones Street.

Miroslav Holub's poem catalogues a rich collection of images in a young mind and extols the sense of wonder that their diversity evokes. Echoing this feeling, Seth Becker's exhibition assembles some twenty-five paintings that feature a similarly broad range of subjects, with figures, animals, and landscapes depicted in both real and imagined contexts.

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The variety of his subjects reflects the diversity of his creative approaches, which include transforming existing imagery, engaging in traditional observation, and conjuring wholly imagined situations.

In their willingness to pursue an unrestrained imagination, Becker's works mount a quiet argument on behalf of wonder. This point is quietly echoed in *The Horse that Spells*, which depicts a horse named "Lady Wonder," famous for her purported psychic abilities and capacity to communicate. Becker's paintings work to recapture the sense of mystery and joy found in the exploration of the strange and inexplicable, embodying the delight of encountering the strange, the old, and the unknown.

The exhibition also includes several works that address the same subject in different scenarios. For instance, *Antoine's Tiger* is one of two works that depict a tiger, and two paintings feature images of Batman. Other works are linked by recurring motifs, as seen in a set of three paintings that initially appear unconnected. In *Acrobat*, a figure clad in a Tiffany blue dress contorts herself into an enchanting pose, spot lit as if for a performance. This figure reappears in *The Acrobat Reveals Her Birthmark in the Shape of a Rabbit*, where a view of her back reveals a unique birthmark in the shape of a leaping hare. Becker reintroduces this image in *Weathervane*, a stormy landscape featuring a barn topped by a weathervane in the shape of the same leaping hare. These repeated images foster a sense of connection between otherwise unrelated images, transforming seemingly autonomous works into key elements of a cohesive and richly imagined world.

Becker's paintings engage with various forms of image making. An avid collector of "real photo postcards"—a type of vintage postcard that reproduces vernacular and often unex-

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pected snapshot photography on postcard stock—Becker’s collecting habits often bleed into his painting practice, and these images occasionally provide the architecture for his compositions. In some instances, Becker directly references works by other artists, as in *Watteau’s Skull*, where the main figure echoes the odalisque from Jean-Antoine Watteau’s *Reclining Figure* (c. 1713-1717), a small painting held by the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena.

More frequently, Becker explores the theme of artistic production by depicting artists at work. *Painting by Moonlight* portrays an artist painting a model under the eerie light of the moon, while *Poet at Work* shows a poet at his typewriter, apparently unaware of the fox standing nearby, jaws agape. Both works reinterpret the genre of the “studio painting,” transforming the site of creative production into a realm where the boundary between reality and imagination no longer obtains. These otherworldly settings cast the artist as a creator of worlds, wherein a poet may conjure a fox into his study, or the moonlight might illuminate a painter’s subject. Taken together, Becker’s paintings fuse reality and fantasy to evoke a feeling of youthful enchantment, where the boundary between the real and the imagined is fluid and permeable.

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Seth Becker was born in 1987 in New York. He received his BFA from Marymount Manhattan College, his BFA from the New York Studio School, and his MLS from Queens College.

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His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at numerous galleries, including recent presentations at Pamela Salisbury Gallery, Hudson, and Castle Gallery, Los Angeles. Becker's work frequently features in group exhibitions both stateside and abroad, including recent presentations at Lévy, Gorvy, Dayan, Rohatyn; Helena Anrather, New York; Cob Gallery, London, Sibyl Gallery, New Orleans; Pamela Salisbury Gallery, Hudson; Venus Over Manhattan, New York; Sykes Gallery, Millersville University; and the Susquehanna Art Museum, Harrisburg. Becker lives and works in Wappingers Falls, New York.

For additional information about the exhibition and availability, please contact the gallery at [info@venusovermanhattan.com](mailto:info@venusovermanhattan.com)

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39 Great Jones Street &  
55 Great Jones Street  
New York, NY 10012

## GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday – Saturday  
10:00 am – 6:00 pm

## PRESS CONTACT

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## IMAGES

*The Acrobat Reveals Her Birthmark in the Shape of a Rabbit*, 2023. Oil on panel; Work: 10 x 8 in (25.4 x 20.3 cm) Framed: 10  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 8  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (27.3 x 22.2 cm).

*Antoine's Tiger*, 2023. Oil on panel; Work: 12 x 16 in (30.5 x 40.6 cm) Framed: 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 16  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (32.4 x 42.5 cm).

*Bathers in a Storm*, 2023. Oil on panel; Work: 9 x 12 in (22.9 x 30.5 cm) Framed: 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  in (24.8 x 32.4 cm).

All images of works by Seth Becker, courtesy the artist and Venus Over Manhattan, New York.