

D. D. D. D.

179 Canal St, Ste 3B/4D  
New York, NY 10013

Manuel Stehli, Stefan Knauf

*Paradies*

February 22 – March 24, 2024

Opening Reception February 23, 2024, 6–9pm

Press Release

D. D. D. D. is pleased to present *Paradies*, a joint exhibition by Berlin-based artists Stefan Knauf and Manuel Stehli.

In *Paradies*, Knauf and Stehli work together to examine historical reflections of natural landscapes. Many artists task themselves with rendering the natural world with honesty and precision, yet Knauf and Stehli aim to reveal the contradictions of this pursuit. The usual methods of reproduction often forfeit entropy, decay, and diversity, qualities that make up the very essence of landscape. Knauf and Stehli's work finds itself in this tension; Knauf fashions everlasting flora from metal while Stehli paints imaginary landscapes that evade time and place.

Historically, landscape paintings seek to mimic and describe nature—one untouched by the human hand. Using an imagined island, Stehli ruminates on the essence of what it means to paint such landscapes. His paintings stand on the traditional pillars of form, perspective, color, and materiality—categorizations necessary for an artist to render a supposed truthful representation of a natural landscape. Yet Stehli condenses these visual classifications not only for the sake of naturalistic potency but to comment on the modification and construction of our ecosystems in the real world.

Stehli's islands are concrete, yet their ambiguity rejects time and specificity. Their forms repeat, but the colors vary slightly from painting to painting. The brushstrokes are almost indiscernible, creating a flatness that draws attention to the methods of the painting's very construction. However, Stehli does not alienate us completely from the history of landscape painting; the solitude and vastness of his imaginary islands loom over our own feeble notions of control over the land we inhabit.

Knauf approaches "landscape" by sculpting the natural world through highly industrial processes. His metallic recreation of a cactus in *Saguaro II* illuminates the jarring attempts of humankind to control and contain nature through artificial fabrication. While a live cactus thrives in deserted environments whilst hosting a plethora of delicate species, Knauf's cactus exists in a void—one that contradicts nature's essence of sustainability and interdependency.

As the ecosystem degenerates, our attempts to restore balance are often industrialized. We attempt to mimic nature, but our inability to fully understand its cyclical and organic processes

further pushes us towards a future of synthesized landscapes. Uniformity and monocultures give way to destruction and monotony. Knauf's recreations in form naively strip the cactus of its use and ability. The metal cactus is dead, cold, and everlasting.

### Artist Biographies

Manuel Stehli (b. 1988, Zurich, Germany) studied painting at the Academy of Visual Art Leipzig and at the Camberwell College of Arts in London and is currently based in Berlin. Widely exhibited internationally, he had recent group exhibitions at Alzueta, Barcelona, Briefing Room, Brussels, Interface, Berlin, Helmhaus Zürich, Zurich. Recent solo exhibitions include 1690X Art Space, Shanghai, Schierke Seinecke, Frankfurt, TAO Art Space, Taipei, Grisebach, Zurich, Marguo, Paris, Lemoyne, Zurich, Czech Centre, Berlin. The exhibition at D. D. D. D. is his second two person show with Stefan Knauf, with whom he previously showed at Livie Gallery, Zurich.

Stefan Knauf (b. 1990, Munich, Germany, lives and works in Berlin, Germany) explores the ideological and colonial structures that continuously shape the world through design and space-making practices, particularly regarding the landscape and the natural world. Knauf's recent research has led him to countless ecosystem restoration initiatives around the world, where governments and companies are effectively attempting to "re-create" previously destroyed or eroded natural environments. Recent solo exhibitions include *Diorama*, Eyes Only Gallery, Munich, Germany, and *Birds don't cry*, Robert Grunenberg, Berlin, Germany. Knauf has shown in group exhibitions at Saint Anne Galerie, Paris, Salon am Moritzplatz, Berlin, fructa space, Munich.

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