



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



ROB THOM *Fumbly Punts*

October 23 - December 4, 2021

Opening Reception

Saturday, October 23 from 6 to 8 pm
470 N Doheny Drive, Los Angeles

M+B is pleased to announce *Fumbly Punts*, an exhibition of new paintings by Rob Thom. This is the artist's second solo show with the gallery, and will run from October 23 through December 4, 2021 at **M+B Doheny** (470 N. Doheny Drive). An opening reception will be held on Saturday, October 23, from 6:00 to 8:00pm.

In his new exhibition, *Fumbly Punts*, Rob Thom pushes our discomfort surrounding American absurdism to an uneasy fever pitch, figuring it as equal parts charming and macabre, human and uncanny. Thom gracefully arrests the strange within the familiar, rendering the jagged pulse of Americana with both wry charisma and surreal fervor. His paintings are not documentarian, but rather indulge in the cunning humor of a subjective point of view, applying a dirty realist sheen to everyday observations made from within the game itself. At the heart of this American game lies an unsettling question: do we participate in its absurdity because we have to, or because we want to?

Thom's paintings take football, America's greatest game, as their starting point, reimagining mundane sporting scenes as gonzo allegories. Throngs of TV screens descend like divine mandates from God, bathing sports bars and Vegas betting-rooms in a wash of neon light. Crowds of bodies lurch forward and recede at random, a web of gangly, darkly comedic expressions. Occasionally the crowd spills out onto the football field itself, burly construction workers and women in white dresses looming eerily over the shoulders of their favorite players. The athletes dance in unison, flex their arms towards heaven, shrug as they exit the field. While Thom's paintings employ culturally loaded iconography, he avoids descending into moralism or pop sociology; these works refuse to be reduced to statements on a discrete culture. Each character is allotted a full range of emotion, each image is handled with unromantic compassion. The disquieting thrill of Thom's work exists not in the figures he chooses to depict, but rather in the allure of participation itself. Football is merely a stand-in for any number of unsettling American configurations.

Thom's paintings land like punches to the gut. Characters extend into archetypal poses, pantomiming exaggerated movements in unexpected inversions of Robert Longo's "Men in The Cities" series. Scenes are arrested midflight, oozing a frantic kinetic energy. Top-heavy crowds and massive blue skies force our eyes towards the fray at centerfield. Parades advance forward into the light, producing a trompe l'oeil affect – like Wile E. Coyote racing towards a tunnel painted onto the side of a mountain, one gets the sense of helplessly tumbling towards the action as it unravels. Enter the gladiator's ring. Thom's canvasses are animated by a bright, backlit perspective, reminiscent of both stained-glass windows and the sickly glow of old box TVs. Much like stained-



glass windows and TV screens, these paintings disintegrate when viewed up close, characters and movements dissolving into blurry strokes. Thom's scenes coalesce at a distance, their densely populated thickets adopting the cadence of a single unified movement. Individual figures and positions may change, but the gameplay remains intact. Perhaps that is the punchline: regardless of the players involved, we seem to arrive at the same conclusion, which is a refusal of greater meaning beyond the shared experience of both entertainment and discomfort. There is no shelter from American perversion in the world Thom depicts, only a gnawing sense that we might enjoy the perversity of the game more than we're willing to admit.

Rob Thom (b. 1975, Santa Barbara, CA) received his MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2004. His work has been featured in exhibitions at Peres Projects, Berlin, Germany; Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York; China Art Objects, Los Angeles; Anna Zorina Gallery, New York; Hiromi Yoshii Gallery, Tokyo, Japan and Galerie Julius Hummel, Vienna, Austria. Notable press includes *The New York Times*, *CARLA*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. His work is held in numerous private and public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rob Thom lives and works in Bainbridge Island, WA.

Location:	M+B Doheny , 470 North Doheny Drive, Los Angeles, California 90048
Show Title:	<i>Rob Thom: Fumbly Punts</i>
Exhibition Dates:	October 23 - December 4, 2021
Opening Reception:	Saturday, October 23, 6 – 8 pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm

For all inquiries, please contact info@mbart.com.