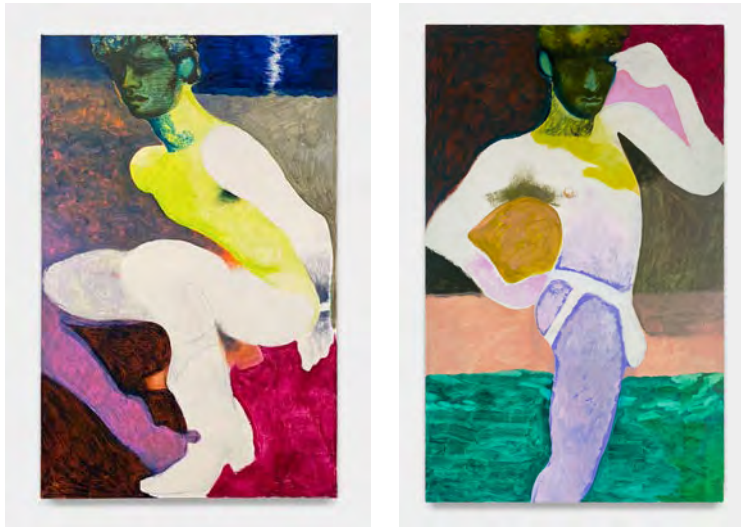




Alex Foxtan: *Sunshower* (after Stanley Stellar)

April 29 – June 3, 2023

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 29, 5–7 pm



Alex Foxtan © Alan Lynes, 2023 & Scott Pink, 2023.

Kapp Kapp is pleased to announce *Sunshower* (after Stanley Stellar), Alex Foxtan's debut US solo exhibition and his first exhibition with the gallery. Presenting a body of fourteen major new paintings and a suite of works on paper, Foxtan looked to the iconic images of New York's gay piers by famed photographer Stanley Stellar as inspiration for his first exhibition in New York.

Foxtan, born in the UK, relocated to Paris following his graduation from Central Saint Martins College, where he studied Womenswear and Menswear respectively. Coming up at several of the industry's highest-regarded heritage brands, Foxtan began his painting practice alongside his design work. Ironically, *heritage* has long been a part of his painting process, looking both to the myth and history of male archetypes for previous reference.

In a sense, myth and history fittingly describe the lore of 'The Piers' as they were known. Hidden from the public eye, separated by barricade and the then elevated West Side Highway, most of The Piers' history is anecdotal and, for Foxtan's generation of queers, like ours, look back on this time, pre-AIDS epidemic, as a manifestation of unobscured freedom, both sexually and creatively. Stellar, among the many artists regularly present at The Piers during the 1970s until their demolition in the mid-1980s, recorded his many experiences, accumulating the most prolific body of photographs of The Piers.



Like his previous allusions to historical figures Napoleon Bonaparte and British naval hero Lord Horatio Nelson, Foxtan found similar intrigue in the characters of Stellar's representations of The Piers. Spending many months in the studio sketching and studying, immersed in Stellar's vast archive of Piers photographs, Foxtan began interpolating Stellar's images into his signature, vivid mythologies.

Take Foxtan's *Piers Roof, July 1978, 2023* (each painting titled after an original Stellar photograph), among the largest works in the exhibition at over seven feet in height, is filled edge to edge with the figure. Rendered larger than life, Foxtan's figure, like Stellar's, peels off his shirt in the hot Summer sun on the roof of The Piers, paused in this moment, delighting in his glow. Foxtan's delineation transcribes the sweat of the figure's torso with a vibrant pink and red, at once abstracting the sinuous chest of Stellar's photograph while invoking the precise burning lust and vigor, which radiate from the canvas. Or take Foxtan's *Tava Von Wills, 2023*, another largescale canvas, looks to the legendary painter known for his many murals at The Piers. Foxtan lyrically surrounds Von Wills with reclining figures on different spatial planes, recalling Seurat's famous park-goers and calling back to the momentous murals Von Wills would have been enveloped in.

Historically, painting and photography as media for expression have a complicated relationship, dating back to the advent of modern photography in the 19th century. As photographic technology proliferated, the two informed and challenged one another as the need to document realities through painting faded. As a search for meaning, painting and photography together have the essential ability to perceive truth. As Allan Sekula notes in his 1975 essay *On the Invention of Photographic Meaning*, "Every photographic image is a sign, above all, of someone's investment in the sending of a message. Every photographic message is characterized by a tendentious rhetoric."¹ Beyond translating Stellar's images and forms, Foxtan's oil paintings recognize the elemental truths of Stellar's photographs.

Foxtan, whose approach to drawing and painting is deeply connected to his love of music, asked Stellar if any records stood out in memory from these years of photographing The Piers. Stellar's response, which later filled Foxtan's studio while in production on this body of work, was Doctor Buzzard's Original Savannah Band's 1976 *Sunshower*.

Sunshower (after Stanley Stellar) will be on view through June 3.

Alex Foxtan (b. 1980, England, UK) lives and works in Paris, France. Foxtan earned his Bachelors and Masters degrees from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London, UK. Recent exhibition include Galerie Derouillon, Paris, France and Brussels, Belgium; Sprüth Magers; and Galerie Perrotin, Paris. His work is in the public collection of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Florida.

¹ Sekula, Allan. "On The Invention of Photographic Meaning." *Artforum*, Vol. 13, No. 5 (1975): 36-45.