

Simon Martin

La rivière

06.19-09.20.2025*

Simon Martin's new exhibition at the Galerie Jousse Entreprise, entitled *La Rivière*, marks a shift in his work. The intimate, which has always been one of his primary preoccupations, is no longer expressed solely in its emotional texture or latent sensuality: it becomes heterogeneous material, troubled ground where an implicit commentary on the way in which our subjectivities are formed and diffracted in the contemporary world.

Once again, Simon Martin's starting point is what is familiar to him: the intimacy of his telephone screen. He starts off by recreating the shape of this digital environment. All the canvases are long and vertical, modelled on the proportions of a smartphone. The thinness of the paint layer - much finer than in his previous series - is a direct reference to screens. Most of the paintings follow the same logic: a collage of two images selected during his browsing on the Internet and juxtaposed to evoke the continuous dynamics of *scrolling*¹. This visual construction, in which each painting becomes a reflection of the temporary pause between two snippets of content, transposes the discontinuous flow of screens into the painting. The hanging of the paintings reinforces this sensation; they are arranged very close together, producing an almost mechanical visual repetition. In this way, the works act as a saturated surface, a kind of screen wall that overwhelms the eye.

The intimate, a theme which Simon Martin has until now approached with romanticism, shifts here towards something ambiguous, even distressing. It is no longer the tenderness of relationships so much as the moments of solitary latency, spent *scrolling*, that are examined here: the way in which our subjectivities are formed and dissolve into the incessant flow of images, and our inability to control this process. A diffracted narrative is created, a kind of exquisite visual corpse that abolishes all hierarchy between past and present, high and popular culture. On the canvases, a portrait of the Danish painter Hammershøi interacts with make-up tutorials, while a domestic scene re-enacting Caillebotte's *Les Raboteurs* sits alongside a body-building session.

The principle of collage produces in particular a tension that arises from the subtle shift between the recognisable and the unknown: banal images become disturbing when taken out of context and juxtaposed with seemingly unrelated ones. In line with the psychoanalytical tradition and the affect theory, this shift brings to the surface the shadow of what our visual routines convey - norms, desires and impulses. The digital unconscious becomes pictorial matter, and it is within this friction between intimate saturation and loss of reference points that the tension of the exhibition lies. The acid green which stands out in some canvases, for the first time in Simon Martin's work, accentuates this dissonance: it evokes the special effects artificial green screens, like so many simulated realities. The more subterranean recurring presence of water - rain, puddles, reflections - which is often cloudy, perpetuates this anxiety. It encapsulates the uneasiness of our digital intimacy: narcissistic needs, the elusive nature of images, the fear of deletion.

Camille Bréchnignac

1. The word "scroll" refers to the act of scrolling through content on a screen, often to access new content below. The concept of scrolling applies to any screen on which all available content isn't shown at once and is often used by social media such as Twitter, Reddit, TikTok and Instagram. The content displayed is potentially infinite, as with every scroll more loads.

Simon Martin graduated from the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 2017 and studied at the Royal School of Fine Arts in Copenhagen in 2016. He is the Laureate of the Bertrand de Demandolx-Dedons Portrait Prize 2017 awarded by Les Amis des Beaux-Arts. In 2019, he took part in the Émerige Révélation as well as the Antoine Marin Prize.

In autumn 2025, Simon Martin will present his first solo exhibition in China at the ICICLE cultural space in Shanghai on the invitation of Myriam Kryger.

His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Jousse Entreprise gallery in 2023 and 2020, at the FIAC fair at the Grand Palais Éphémère in 2021, and at Peter Kilchmann gallery in Zurich in 2023. Simon Martin has also taken part in group exhibitions in France and abroad, most recently at Château La Coste in Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate, MO. CO in Montpellier, the Musée des Sables d'Olonnes, the Musée Estrine in Saint-Rémy de Provence, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dôle, the MUCEM in Marseille, and the Fondation Pernod-Ricard in Paris; and internationally at the Artissima fair in Turin (Italy) and the Material fair in Mexico City (Mexico) in 2024. In September 2024, on the invitation of Thomas Levy-Lasne, his work was exhibited at the Musée d'Orsay on the occasion of the *Jour des peintres* (Painters' Day), where he was one of 80 contemporary French painters to meet visitors.

Simon Martin's work joined the Agnès b. collection for contemporary art in 2019 and the collection of the Musée d'Art Moderne of Paris in 2021.

*closing 07.26 - 09.1

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