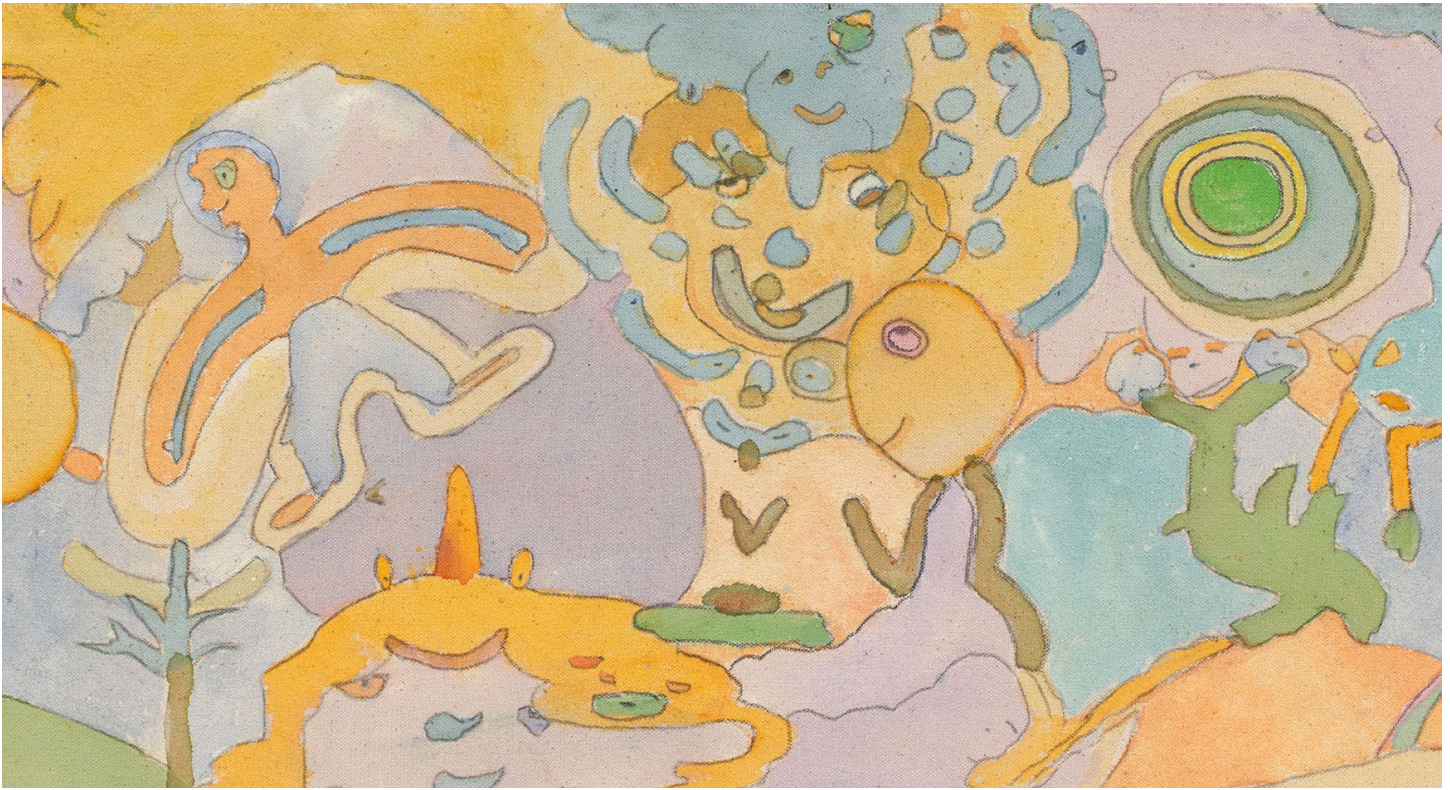


Ross Simonini

Scrolls

March 7 – April 2, 2024



François Ghebaly New York is proud to present *Scrolls*, Ross Simonini's first exhibition with the gallery at its Lower East Side location.

Ross Simonini's artistic project hinges on a kind of generosity—open, plural considerations of connection, meaning, and form. Simonini is a painter, musician, author and multi-hyphenate wordsmith. Over the past two decades, he's produced a singular oeuvre, one dedicated to the crossing and recrossing of boundaries of medium (anywhere from a roman à clef novel to site-specific performances to studio LPs) in the pursuit of an unmistakable personal poetics.

Simonini's use of homophones, double entendres, and hidden writing schemes creates an overarching linguistic register that becomes an invisible force within his images. *Scrolls*, his latest exhibition of new paintings, is perhaps the most direct expression of this impulse in his work so far. "The language of the conscious mind is text, and the language of the unconscious mind is image," Simonini says. "You

can't read in a dream. So when you turn text into image, you're taking a conscious experience and sending it into the unconscious."

For Simonini, the 'hidden' writings in question are actual phrases he writes and draws into the shapes of the painted figures, celebratory refrains repeated over and over again throughout a single painting, but never spoken aloud. A letter becomes a smile, an eye, a waving arm. "My hope," he says, "is that language is felt."

The *Scrolls* invoke a feeling of narration through their rolling, longitudinal design. Across time and culture, the 'long' form has been a visual mode instrumentalized for the depiction of epics—stories that chart development, decline, and transformation.

Simonini's images, fittingly described by the artist as 'bachannals,' recall the jostling, polychrome masked crowds of a James Ensor painting. Across the eight scenes that comprise

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Scrolls, streams of colorful, pareidoliac sprites aggregate in fête-like formations, at once jubilant, endearing, and hallucinatory. The artworks themselves are crafted from a list of materials with origins dating back to Fra Angelico frescoes and Greek antiquity: egg tempera, casein milk paint, and plain cotton. The almost sculptural sense of organic materials accentuates the animistic quality of Simonini's painting. Milk and egg are, after all, building blocks of life.

At the same time, Simonini is referencing the "scrolling" that has become our contemporary world's primary means of beholding images, reading text and the various combinations of both we all encounter daily. To scroll is to enter a mode of perception that almost mirrors our natural, panoramic experience—a flowing motion that cannot be expressed in a single, static glance. Like an unfurling poem, an exploratory sentence or even a musical score, these scrolls must be felt one look at a time.

Ross Simonini is an artist and writer based in Los Angeles. Simonini received his bachelor's degree from the University of California and his MFA from Bennington College. Recent solo exhibitions include sun.works, Zurich; SHRINE, Los Angeles; Anonymous Gallery, New York; Sharjah Biennial 13, UAE; Et Al, San Francisco. and Shoot the Lobster, Luxembourg. Recent group exhibitions include Vielmetter, Los Angeles; François Ghebaly, Rome; and Altman Siegel, San Francisco.