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"Home is Not a Place" at Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles

## EXHIBITIONS

# Thomas Liu Le Lann "i'm not okay" at Vin Vin, Vienna

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The first cut is the deepest. This phrase is not only the title of the popular and often covered love song by Cat Stevens: In our case, it can also be read as a comment on first sexual experiences as well as an anecdote about self-harm and emo culture.

For Thomas Liu Le Lann's first solo presentation in Austria, we are confronted with a multilayered storyline that eludes itself from a clear chronology. We are presented a framework in which the border between romanticization and perversion is completely subjective and at times non-distinguishable.

The terms shell and core gain relevance as the artist digs deeper into the structures of queer and especially homosexual affairs. We are witnesses to a hunt for intimacy.

The relationship between the "inwardness" of the artistic, poetic self and "outwardness"—an orientation to something beyond artistic communication—and the place in which that relationship can be established, are at question. When we understand intimacy as simultaneously nonexistent (in the sense of that securing actual privacy, especially nowadays, is impossible) and flooded with narcissist exaltation and public attention—the search for such itself becomes abundant. [1]

Underneath the as soft appearing surfaces of Thomas' works, one often finds a form of poetic radicalism. They hold a sort of bravery with which his pieces talk not solely about contemporary aesthetics but evoke questions on sociopolitical circumstances such as mentioned above (e.g. the matter of intimacy). In their appearance similar to (animal-) hentai-porn —cute yet brutal, soft but harsh at the same time —they dare the audience to gaze. They demand for a reflection of the associations we have with certain materials and their contextualization in the given space.

They hit home where public and private realms collapse.



Besides alluring historical figures like Saint Stanislaus, over whom the artist stumbled and afterwards obsessed during a trip to Rome, his education in a strictly conservative school further inspired the process of creating his recent pieces, some of them presently being exhibited.

Childhood memories are recollected and approached from a distanced, queer perspective. Ultimately, they are forced into a symbiosis with present-day objects representing a cult of ordering online, such as zombie knives or steel butt plugs.

With "i'm not okay" the artist's feelings, affections, desires and even secrets are on display for everyone to see.

(Julius Pristauz)

well if you wanted honesty, that's all you had to say

i never want to let you down or have you go, it's better off this way

for all the dirty looks

for photographs your boyfriend took

remember when you broke your foot from jumping out the second floor?

i'm not okay

i'm not okay

i'm not okay

you wear me out

what will it take to show you that it's not the life it seems? (i'm not okay)

i told you time and time again you sing the words but don't know what it means

to be a joke and look

another line without a hook

i held you close as we both shook for the last time

take a good hard look

i'm not okay

i'm not okay

i'm not okay

you wear me out

forget about the dirty looks

the photographs your boyfriend took?

you said you read me like a book, but the pages all are torn and frayed

i'm okay

i'm okay

i'm okay, now

(i'm okay, now)

but you really need to listen to me

because i'm telling you the truth

i mean this

i'm okay (trust me)

i'm not okay

i'm not okay

well, i'm not okay

i'm not o-fucking-kay

i'm not okay

i'm not okay (okay)