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CRITIC'S GUIDE - 02 MAY 2017

Critic's Guide: New York

The best shows to see across town during Frieze Week New York



Wilhelm Sasnal, *Untitled (Choke)*, 2017, oil on canvas, 1.6 x 2 m. Courtesy: the artist and Anton Kern Gallery, New York

Wilhelm Sasnal
[Anton Kern](#)
22 April – 20 May

At the entrance to Wilhelm Sasnal's solo exhibition hangs a painting of the United Nations seal: painted at an angle, we seem to view it on a mounted TV screen, glowing blue in the darkness. Three small, sombre portraits of past Secretaries General – Ban Ki Moon, Kofi Annan and Kurt Waldheim – hang in an adjacent gallery. But it's Sasnal's portraits of politicians that truly unsettle; in them, our modern cult of personality seems utterly devoid of character, flattened as it might be on a computer monitor. See Angela Merkel, coldly staring at her younger, redder self; or Marine Le Pen, her features smoothed like a moulded mannequin's. Upstairs, two nearly identical portraits depict Hillary Clinton approaching a podium, painted from behind, her dark figure outlined by the flash of cameras; in one, her outstretched hand gets caught in a corona of light. Sasnal's show is the first in Anton Kern's new Uptown space, a resplendent, five-story townhouse in the shadow of Trump Tower; if this seems auspicious, refer to the message in a painting by the door: 'Choke on your silver spoon, you fucking Nazi!'