



Shimmering shallows

The young London painter George Rouy brings Fernando Botero and Henry Moore onto the dance floor. But behind the cool surface of his painting lies a deeper truth. A “black swan” always comes at an inopportune time, as it is a metaphor for a severely disruptive event. So what is the significance of Black Swan, a 2018 work by the up-and-coming London painter George Rouy? After all, the large-format acrylic painting poses a riddle: Not only does the supposedly black swan shine in a dark, luminous blue, but something or other has broken its neck. majestic-looking animal, someone or something has broken or something has broken the animal’s neck, so that the overall impression is rather grotesque. But according to the young British artist, this is also the intention, after all, it is supposed to be a “symbol of confused masculinity”. Which fits with the confused personal impression that quickly emerges during the conversation: Rouy shows himself to be a sensitive and thoughtful contemporary with the shimmering aura of an existentialist New Wave dandy, whose reflective habitus has little in common with the thuggish posturing of the “Young British Artists” who stirred up London in the nineties. But above all, his art is surprising: the figures that populate his canvases seem to be anchored in the deepest 20th century. They are reminiscent of Fernando Botero and Henry Moore. cites Picasso, Matisse and Chagall as influences. This sounds retro, but it is not. After all, his canvases exude the intense aura of those successful moments of contemporary underground club culture that provided the impetus for many of his motifs: A shimmering heat emerges from the deafening sounds of cold machine music, in which not only clearly defined gender roles blur, but also the boundaries between individuals dissolve for a short time. To experience this, he didn’t even have to go to “Berghain”; he found his original inspiration in the scene of warehouse raves in the post-industrial cityscapes of south-east London. But that is only superficially the point. Behind the cool surfaces of the works lies the deeper truth that, despite all the discussions about virtual worlds, we are for the time being concrete physical and social beings - as can be seen not least in the side effects, as painful as they are paradoxical, of the great current disruption that demands distance for reasons of solidarity. // GUNNAR LÜTZOW