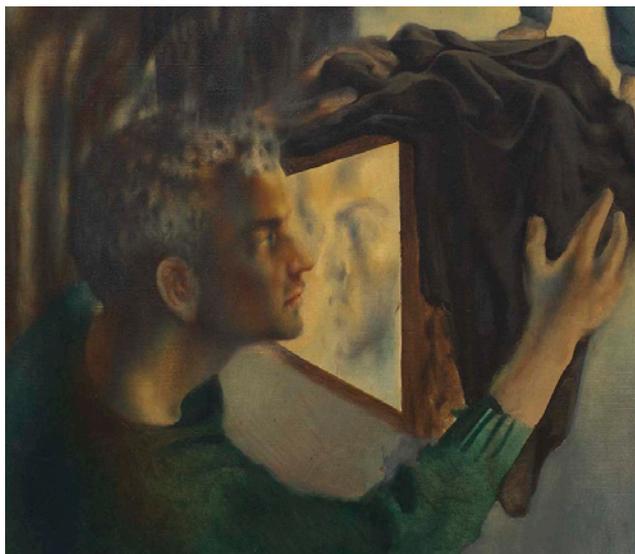


The Young and Evil

Curated by Jarrett Earnest

February 21–April 13, 2019
533 West 19th Street, New York

Opening reception: Thursday, February 21, 6–8 PM
Press preview with Jarrett Earnest: Thursday, February 21, 5 PM



Pavel Tchelitchew, *George Platt Lynes*, c. 1937–1942 (detail)

David Zwirner is pleased to present *The Young and Evil*, a group exhibition curated by Jarrett Earnest, at the gallery's 533 West 19th Street location in New York. The exhibition will feature significant works from the first half of the twentieth century by Paul Cadmus, Fidelma Cadmus Kirstein, Charles Henri Ford, Jared French, Margaret Hoening French, George Platt Lynes, Bernard Perlin, Pavel Tchelitchew, George Tooker, Jensen Yow, and their circle. This group of artists and writers looked away from abstraction toward older sources and models—classical and archaic forms of figuration and Renaissance techniques. What might be seen as a reactionary aesthetic maneuver was made in the service of radical content—endeavoring to depict their own lives.

Drawn from important public and private collections, key works include a painting from Paul Cadmus's infamous sailor trilogy, *Shore Leave* (1933), on loan from the Whitney Museum of American Art; a major canvas by Pavel Tchelitchew featuring vignettes of George Platt Lynes at work; rare paintings by Margaret Hoening French and works on paper by Fidelma Cadmus Kirstein; and never-before-seen erotic drawings and photographs from the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University. On the occasion of the exhibition, a fully illustrated, comprehensive catalogue featuring new scholarship by art historians Ann Reynolds and Kenneth E. Silver is forthcoming from David Zwirner Books.

Jarrett Earnest notes:

Another modernism existed, beating at the very heart of New York's culture in the early twentieth century. These artists and writers were new social creatures, playfully and boldly homosexual at a time when it was both criminalized and pathologized. They pursued a modernism of the body—driven by eroticism and bounded by intimacy, forming a hothouse world within a world that doesn't nicely fit any subsequent narrative of modern American art. The Young and Evil tells their story through never-before-exhibited photographs, sculptures, drawings, ephemera, and rarely seen major paintings—offering the first view of its kind into their interwoven intellectual, artistic, and personal lives.

The exhibition's name derives from the tongue-in-cheek title of the 1933 collaborative novel by poet Charles Henri Ford and critic Parker Tyler—an experimental fantasia of two genderqueer characters bopping around New York's gay underground. In a promotional blurb, Gertrude Stein pronounced: "The Young and Evil creates this generation as This Side of Paradise by Fitzgerald created his generation. It is a good thing, whatever the generation is, to be the first to create it in a book." An artist's edition of the book with watercolors by Ford's lover Pavel Tchelitchew inaugurates the theme of collaboration—underscoring that "culture" does not spring fully formed, Athena-like, from the head of any single person, but is born of dynamic exchange between friends over time.

David Zwirner

This art has been literally and figuratively dragged out of closets for this exhibition. Important suites of all-but-unknown erotic drawings by Paul Cadmus and Pavel Tchelitchew come from their safekeeping at the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University, along with selections from their momentous George Platt Lynes holdings. These artists were enthusiastic supporters of Alfred Kinsey's research, which they understood as work to destigmatize their sexualities. In 1949, Monroe Wheeler, then The Museum of Modern Art's head of exhibitions and publications, and writer Glenway Wescott introduced Kinsey to their circle of friends, many of whom participated in interviews about their sexual histories and provided copious materials related to human sexuality and the arts—a significant aspect of their modernity.

*Portraiture is key, showing the ways these artists represented their relationships with each other. Many of these works were made specifically for their friends, originating from their own collections. Significant figures in their milieu are depicted, like Wheeler and Wescott as well as writers Katherine Anne Porter, Parker Tyler, and Edith Sitwell. Impresario and patron Lincoln Kirstein also appears, an almost gravitational force connecting Cadmus, Lynes, Tchelitchew, and Jared French, among others, to the New York City Ballet. Kirstein was married to Cadmus's sister, Fidelma, an intensely private artist represented here by a selection of never-before-exhibited drawings. Paul Cadmus's infamous triple portrait *Stone Blossom: A Conversation Piece* (1939–1940), an oil and tempera painting on wood panel, depicts the three-way relationship between Wheeler, Wescott, and Lynes lounging in front of the New Jersey estate they shared. In this context, it is clear that these artists' return to anachronistic techniques like egg tempera and silverpoint, while retaining figurative representation, was not mere whim, but served a serious purpose: putting "reactionary" form in the service of "radical" content—the content in question being the very substance of their lives. Given the renewed presence figurative painting currently has within contemporary art—functioning as a major idiom like never before in a century—these artists' precedent couldn't be more vital.*

A special thanks goes to the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University, Bloomington, for their collaboration on this project. The gallery would also like to acknowledge Bridget Moore and Ed De Luca for their generous assistance.

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Jon Anderson (1937–2018).

Special events

"Other Modernisms"

Friday, March 8, 6:30 PM

The gallery will host a discussion between scholar Ann Reynolds and writer Lynne Tillman, moderated by Jarrett Earnest. Reynolds will discuss her research on Parker Tyler and alternative narratives of American surrealism, and Tillman will speak about her history with Charles Henri Ford, having overseen the publication of his diary *Water from a Bucket: A Diary 1948–1957* (2001).

Guided tour of the exhibition with Jarrett Earnest

Saturday, March 30, 4 PM

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