

# FEEL GOOD

Mateas Pares

with a critical text by **Domenico de Chirico**

October 21, 2023 - March 9, 2024

*Opening:* Saturday October 21, from 11 am to 7 pm

GALLERIA GIAMPAOLO ABBONDIO

piazza Giuseppe Garibaldi 7 - Todi (PG)

As movements and trends in art are not seldom the result of the prevailing age, the steady rise of antidepressant drug consumption, and the growing success for artists making unapologetically optimistic, carefree, and naivistic art, appears to be more than a coincidence. In many ways their work can be compared to the deceptively perfect lives which we seem to love to consume in our daily digital lives at the same rate as we simultaneously appear to get increasingly depressed, as most of us inevitably fail to achieve it.

One of the more prolific artists in this genre is Austin Lee. With exhibition titles such as "Aah", "Constant Joy", and "Paradise", he portrays humans, animals, and anthropomorphic objects in an almost dreamlike state of happiness: bubbly flowers growing on noses, smiling hearts replacing fingers, and joyful birds playing with people in a heaven-esque world free from predators and preys. As Peres Projects writes: "Lee's works provide an uncompromisingly optimistic view of our reality". Or in other words, the dream of the perfect life which is simultaneously the cause to, and our escape from, our depression.

Through the repurposing of Lee's artistry — by using one of Lee's exhibition titles, "Feels Good", and removing the "s", to transform the title from being a description of a portrayed perfect life, to the demanding mantra omnipresent in our daily lives; and by depicting individuals in the process of getting squeezed into the shapes of the figures existing in Lee's dreamy world — the project aims to pose questions around our race for the perfect life, and what choices it forces us to make. To quote my psychologist's post-it note, which he had attached to a letter from an institution yet again rejecting me the possibility to receive help for my mental wellbeing: "What do we do now?"

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