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Art Gallery Shows to See in January

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This week in Newly Reviewed, Yinka Elujoba covers Émile Brunet's Renaissance inspirations, Roberto Burle Marx's crashing colors and Melanie Daniel's haunting landscapes.

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Émile Brunet

Through March 7. Plato Gallery, 202 Bowery; 646-454-0000, platogallery.com.



Émile Brunet, "The Apple Picker," 2025. oil on wood. via Émile Brunet and Plato Gallery

During the coronavirus pandemic, the Canadian artist Émile Brunet moved from Montreal to the small town of Stanstead, Quebec. In those quiet days, he conceived the idea for a series of portraits inspired by Renaissance paintings, all of which are the subjects of his new show, “Are They Peasant.”

Brunet often drew inspiration from a strong cast of characters in the village — locals, transplants and passers-by — so that the paintings in the show have a wide range of personas. In the portraits that emerge from these figures, Brunet reimagines stories, culture and images from the Western canon, giving them a modern twist with striking elements, like tattoos.

For example, Brunet’s “Man With a Feather” has references to “[Portrait of a Young Man](#),” by the German-Flemish painter Hans Memling circa 1472-75. Brunet’s subject even wears a hairstyle reminiscent of neo-Classical paintings, but he is dressed in contemporary clothes, and has two Xs tattooed on either cheek.

When Brunet situates his subjects in a visible landscape with perfect clear skies and warm sunlight, the series really begins to coalesce. In “The Apple Picker” (reinterpreting Diana, the Roman goddess of hunting and wilderness), one might be taken in at first with the familiar beanie cap on her head, the orange overalls, the trendy city boots and her unforgettable tattoos.

But it is another figure that makes the work: a dog’s face, its head slightly lowered. In its steady eyes, one senses the weight of all that pastoral brooding, eternally present between humans and the land. *YINKA ELUJOBA*