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## LEO ARNOLD Life during Wartime

2 April – 16 May 2026



Annet Gelink Gallery is pleased to present the second solo exhibition by Leo Arnold at the gallery, featuring a selection of new paintings, shown here for the first time. Borrowing its title from the Talking Heads song, the exhibition brings together paintings of ordinary subjects and self-portraits. Forming a diary of sorts, this exhibition reflects on the dissonance between the experience of everyday life and the awareness of immense suffering elsewhere, examining feelings that emerge from this privileged and distanced condition.

Across the exhibition an array of motifs—skulls, shells, clocks, and horizon lines in the shape of tables, or walls—construct a record of fears and memories. Familiar locations such as a cemetery wall near his apartment and his mother's front door are overlaid with skeletal forms, charging them with dread and rendering the ordinary unstable. The artist's gaze here functions as something of an unreliable lens, through which the audience glimpses a world coloured by his fears.

Through self-portraiture, Arnold portrays himself as both emotionally charged yet hollow— cycling on an Amsterdam street or hiding behind a table topped with shells. In *Predicting Violence*, he appears in a bike helmet—another shell. The helmet, regarded as unnecessary and faintly absurd in the Dutch context, hints at both self-concern and foolishness, casting him as a kind of pierrot.

The paintings are executed intuitively with no strict plan. Mistake, accident and doubt are fundamental aspects to their development, with Arnold prizing painterly discovery as the engine of each work. The paintings labour under their own acute awareness of other possibilities, with entire compositions questioned and reworked. A sequence of stymied solutions and doubtful frustrations result in a highly physical surface rendering the paintings both palimpsests and records of their own making.

They carry a kind of vulnerable self-parody, a hesitant, and at times awkward attempt at locating oneself within a reality that remains only partially understood: a closed door implies something behind, a wall conceals what lies beyond. This lack of self-understanding does not resolve into clarity, but instead shapes the works themselves: things remain fragmentary, gestures unfinished, faces blurred or withheld, forming a continuous circling around something that resists being fully grasped, and yet is still there.

**Leo Arnold** (1993, United Kingdom) studied at the Glasgow School of Art (UK) and was a resident at De Ateliers in Amsterdam (NL). In 2019, Arnold received the Koninklijke Prijs voor Vrije Schilderkunst. Selected exhibitions include Brunette Coleman, London, UK (2025), Loveday, London, UK (2023), Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam, NL (2022), and Giardino dello Zuccaro, Dorsoduro, Venice, IT (2019)