

CHATEAUSHATTO

GERTRUDE ABERCROMBIE • ROSS BLECKNER • CHEN CHING-YUAN • VAN HANOS • BROOK HSU HELEN JOHNSON • JENNIFER J LEE • SALLY MICHEL • JONNY NEGRON • ALEXANDRA NOEL JULES OLITSKI • LAUREN SATLOWSKI • HIROSHI SUGITO • ISSY WOOD • MATTHEW WONG

A Cloth Over a Birdcage

July 27 – September 7, 2019

Opening reception Saturday, July 27, 6–9pm

In 1974, American poet John Ashbery composed a long form ekphrastic lyric occasioned by the painting, *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, by the minor late Renaissance master, Parmigianino. The original circular composition was meticulously rendered in 1524 on a convex panel whose diameter measured no more than 24.4cm, or just shy of ten inches. With its extravagantly curved perspectives, this remains a virtuosic feat of the medium made more so by being performed on such a tightly delimited stage.

It was for this reason that Ashbery found therein not an enigma but a pearl – a concise distillation of the plight of the artist whose hand is distorted by the world even as he, in turn, seeks to distort it by capturing its reflection. It is a chiasmic conundrum with the inward pull of a compact atomic core.

In its totality, Ashbery's words would come to encompass a surface-area that far exceeds Parmigianino's diminutive masterwork. Through that medallion-like portal he enters into expansive ruminations that span questions of memory, pathos and empathy all the while outlining a sweetly abbreviated ontology. As he writes:

But it is life englobed.

One would like to stick one's hand

Out of the globe, but its dimension,

What carries it, will not allow it.

The artists in Château Shatto's forthcoming exhibition share Ashbery and Parmigianino's affinity for revelations in miniature guises. Their output ranges from the modestly scaled to the truly petite and they embrace this limitation for their own idiosyncratic reasons. Some uncover respite from the heroic demands of the monumental; others an opportunity to work through ideas and impulses to be articulated later in a distended tableau. Some find purpose in offering peeks of private inner worlds or are galvanized by the economy of restrained abstraction; while others still harness the gravitational pull of locket-size images which are almost devotional in their allure. Whatever their instinct, they craft 'superficial but visible cores' that propose an entirely different type of viewing. Arresting in their potency, these works demand an embodied and sustained perusal that, at its best, draws the viewer in slowly and deliberately not unlike thread through a needle's eye.