

Morgan
Presents

Mike Shultis: Déjà vu

September 4—October 12, 2024



Morgan Presents

Throughout the exhibition *Déjà vu* Mike Shultis promotes a new language of painting. Often we ask: *What is the art of today?* We find ourselves searching for a style or movement as expansive as American post-war Abstract Expressionism, or as cohesive as Color Field painting. Shultis asserts that today's painting is both contextual and radical, historically informed and defiant, it is at its core: post-modern action painting.

Post-modern action painting is uniquely self-aware of its debt to art history. Shultis acknowledges this by appropriating compositions from old masters, while simultaneously reinventing, refashioning and ultimately recasting them in this new language.

What distinguishes these artistic quotations from the historical referencing employed by Cindy Sherman and other artists of the pictures generation, is that in Shultis' painting form and function find their intersection. The layering of materials mirrors the paintings' historical allusions.

Shultis' use of material, the works' constitutive medium, is key to its artistic expression. The term *assemblage* evokes American masters such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, yet we think little of the action this term implies: the physical assembly of materials, the manufacturing line in service of a product greater than the sum of its parts. Of course the layering of history, and appropriation of both commercial and artistic imagery, is most often associated with the work of Andy Warhol. Shultis shares Warhol's embrace of the identifiable source image and an artistic privileging of the surface of a painting; as Warhol would drag his finger through a slick surface of paint on the canvas, Shultis drags his finger through the swirls of art history.

A number of Shultis' compositions are more historically legible, that is to say instantly recognizable, than others. We can identify the pictorial frameworks of Caravaggio and Rubens, despite that materially not a single physical element—not even the use of canvas—is common between the

Morgan Presents

original and Shultis' recasting. Shultis thereby poses questions of authorship that date back to the Ship of Theseus: to what extent can we identify Shultis' layered assemblage of Plexiglas, spray paint and foraged clothing with Rubens' *The Fall of Man* (1628-1629)?

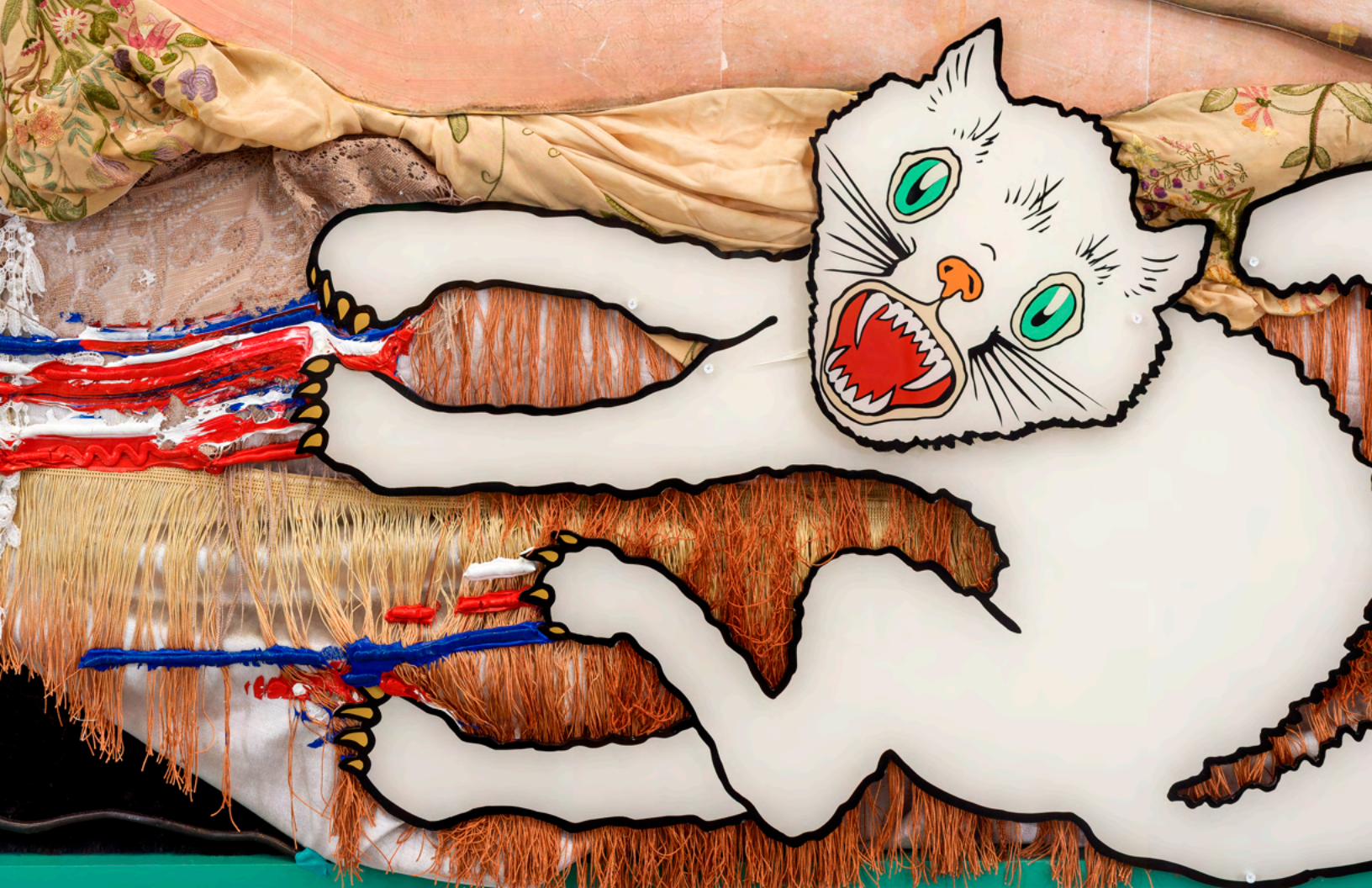
The invocation of historical precursors is central to this post-modern action painting. It is not an exercise in artistic vanity, rather through the superimposition of pre-revolutionary French compositions, with a material assemblage constituted by present day oft-discarded American consumer products, Shultis asserts a commonality between these two indulgent and polarized societies, divided by centuries yet united in an underlying structural instability. Shultis embraces this juxtaposition of histories through his use of Plexiglas and the compression of American life behind this inherently modern medium. This layering suggests that we have been here before, highlighting that we are continuing down a path of rhyming histories, of the rise and fall of empires.

Mike Shultis (b. 1987, Albuquerque, NM) lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. He received his MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale School of Art and holds a BFA in Painting from Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Shultis has had solo exhibitions at Morgan Presents, New York; Ashes/ Ashes, New York; Diane Rosenstein, Los Angeles. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Library Street Collective, Detroit; Carl Kostyál, Stockholm; The Bronx Museum of the Arts; and Rizzuto Gallery, Palermo, Italy.



4 Horses, 2024
Mixed media on panel in artist's frame
88.5 x 72.5 inches
224.8 x 184.2 cm





Cats, 2024
Mixed media on panel in artist's frame on acrylic sheet
113 x 120 inches
287 x 304.8 cm





3 Parrots, 2024
Mixed media on panel, acrylic on acrylic sheet, in artist's frame
88.5 x 72.5 inches
224.8 x 184.2 cm



Doug, 2024

Bison feet, bison fur, taxidermy bison head on panel

57 x 65 x 21 inches

144.8 x 165.1 x 53.3 cm





3 Sheep, 2024

Mixed media on panel in artist's frame

56.5 x 68.5 inches

143.5 x 174 cm





Milk, 2024
Mixed media on panel, acrylic on
acrylic sheet in artist's frame
74.5 x 47 inches
189.2 x 120 cm



Europe 2024
Mixed media on panel, taxidermy
boar mount, archival inkjet on canvas
66 x 58.5 x 24 inches
167.6 x 148.6 x 61 cm





Window 2024
Mixed media on panel in artist's frame,
acrylic sheet, taxidermy barracuda
75 x 55 inches
190.5 x 139.7 cm

