



Palo Gallery Presents *Vanitas*
The Allegory of Vanity in the 20th & 21st Century
4 September – 26 October 2024



Rodrigo Moynihan, *Roman Head, Bottles & Paint Tubes*, 1981-2.
Photo by JSP Art Photography. Courtesy of David Nolan Gallery.

Palo Gallery is pleased to present ***Vanitas***, a group exhibition exploring the legacy of Vanitas art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries with still lifes by established and emerging artists. *Vanitas* draws inspiration from the tradition of still life genre paintings. Featured artists include Lorenzo Amos, Richard Artschwager, Mary Ellen Bartley, Lena Christakes, Victoria Gitman, Phoebe Helander, Martin Kippenberger, Asher Liftin, Jara Lopez Sastre, Rodrigo Moynihan,

Andrea Orejarena & Caleb Stein, Stephen Shanabrook, David Smalling, Emi Winter, and Rachel Wolf.

Still lifes present a unique challenge for artists; the fundamental limitations to still life artwork dissolve the established creative process. Success within these tight parameters reveals that art can investigate deeply esoteric questions that extend beyond the faithful rendering of an object. The constraints and perceived simplicity of the still life allow the viewer to more fully consider the symbolic implications inherent in the objects arranged in the work of art.

Among the various sub-genres of still life painting, the most renowned is likely the Memento Mori, which translates from Latin as "remember you must die"; however, the more intriguing cousin of Memento Mori is the Vanitas. Vanitas focuses on the futility, fragility, and temporality of worldly pleasures—namely, vanities. The genre often depicts wine, food, instruments, books, and even animals. An outgrowth of Christian traditions of piety before God, Vanitas seeks to re-center the narrative of consumption. Twenty-first century artists are particularly provoked by this humility, as the present era of immediacy and digital demand ignores temporality and embraces and even promotes over-consumption. Thus, contemporary Vanitas still life art has changed too, often revealing an artist's craving for simplicity and, in the process, creating a new set of vanities.

Curated by Palo Gallery owner Paul Henkel, *Vanitas* deftly presents still life artworks that embody the spirit of Vanitas; each work explores the inferences that are a natural outgrowth of the tradition. For example, Rodrigo Moynihan's studio paintings adapt traditional motifs of the studio still life by suspending them in stunningly bright spaces, effectively casting light on the futilities of creation. Meanwhile, Phoebe Helander's tranquil paintings freeze ephemeral objects in an endeavor to preserve them in paint, almost trying to underscore the inevitability of the Vanitas genre. David Smalling's two paintings embrace the traditional Dutch Golden Age, yet incorporates iconography to interrogate the vanities of twenty-first century America.

Vanitas will be on view from **4 September through 26 October 2024**.

About Palo Gallery

Established in 2018 in New York City by third-generation art collector and dealer Paul Henkel, Palo Gallery brings to bear a tradition of art scholarship and patronage, working as a true thought partner with artists to realize their visions and create dynamic presentations. Extensive research by the Palo curatorial team ensures that each exhibition is advised by the art historical canon and contemporary cultural touchpoints. In 2022, Palo Gallery opened its new 3,400-square-foot flagship space designed by Selldorf Architects in the NoHo district of Manhattan as the only dedicated partner showcasing Vica by Annabelle Selldorf. A destination of discovery, Palo Gallery's multifaceted program ranges from tightly curated, thematic group

exhibitions to insightful art historically informed solo exhibitions spanning a breadth of artistic endeavors.

Since its inception, Palo Gallery has sought to incorporate thematic elements into its curatorial practice – whether it be group shows or solo presentations. Early exhibitions marked the gallery’s foray into concept-driven presentations focusing on themes of memory and our most primitive instincts. *Memories Manifest* (2021) saw seven artists working in response to each other and the theme of memory, while *Primordial* (2021) investigated the ways that thoughts, emotions, reactions, and experiences speak to our most primitive instincts. The large-scale *Real Wild* (2022) presented an array of representations and interpretations of iconography from the American Wild West, a setting in which many of us have a collective archetype that the exhibition sought to re-contextualize. Building on the success of these conceptual group exhibitions, Palo has continued navigating contemporary cultural topics via art historical narratives with a number of solo exhibitions. Today, the gallery continues to showcase thematic presentations that offer Palo Gallery and its artists a unique opportunity to explore pivotal cultural and historical topics at a level that transcends those achieved via a standard solo exhibition. Palo Gallery is located at 30 Bond St., New York, NY.

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