

MATHEW CERLETTY

Full Length Mirror

Opening November 14, 2020

“Artists paint themselves, viewers see themselves - this is *not* related” - Gene Beery

The world has been confined to DIY hermetically sealed chambers for months on end. Packaged and pickled, we continue to wait out the unknown. In his studio, Mathew Cerletty has continued work on a series of paintings of idealized household objects, scaled up and isolated on single color backgrounds. His subjects float, concentrated, preserved and contaminant free, in a purified space that only leaves room for the viewer.

Approaching a Cerletty painting often begins with humor and recognition, but one quickly realizes the exchange is not entirely stress-free. We *understand and know* these objects yet they continually resist our apprehension. According to Cerletty, “I paint them in the hope that they can evolve and remain interesting for different reasons over time.” It’s a strategy that’s proved effective as quarantine hit and symbols take on new meaning.

As looming questions of interpretation draw us in, often until nose is pressed to canvas, we can steady ourselves through craft and technique, and seeing that yes, this picture is painted. The production of these images is refined on a molecular level. Thin layers of paint are applied over months in a seeming attempt to blot out any light from behind the curtain, capturing us on a threshold that Michael Fried cites as “an imaginary boundary between the world of the painting and that of the beholder.”¹

The recapitulating attempts to penetrate Cerletty’s impervious wall are perpetual, igniting a tête-à-tête whose only conclusion is layered multivalency. But in the sincerity of painstaking craft there’s warmth; this is a game that wants to be played. Cerletty’s careful attention conveys significance and his subjects always return a scrutinizing gaze, seeking connection with a viewer who might catalyze the work’s completion.

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Mathew Cerletty (b. 1980, Milwaukee, Wisconsin) is an American artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. Solo exhibitions include: Karma, Standard (Oslo), Office Baroque, Blum & Poe, Albus Greenspon, Team Gallery and Rivington Arms. Group exhibitions include: “Flatlands”, Whitney Museum of American Art; “Sputterances”, Metro Pictures, organized by Sanya Kantarovsky, and “The Painter of Modern Life” curated by Bob Nickas, Anton Kern Gallery, New York.

1. Michael Fried, *Courbet’s Realism* (The University of Chicago Press, 1990) p. 59