

Shall I tell you the secret of the whole world? Painting, Parody & Disguise

March 29 – September 14, 2014

Curated by Michael Stillion

The work of Columbus-born, Cincinnati-based artist Michael Stillion revels in the delirious disguise, pushing notions of both masquerade and refuge to extreme and theatrical ends. His primary medium – painting – has been caught in a bind for decades; widely practiced, yet dismissed as obsolete by many in the art world – including the very architect of this building. The “death of painting” has subsequently become a tired refrain of 21st century art theory, even as the supposed funeral shroud becomes a tantalizing curtain to the next act.

In this exhibition, the genre which was left for dead re-emerges in alternate forms of, and beyond canvas and brush. As both artist and curator Stillion assembles artists from, or currently based, in Cincinnati who turn camouflage, costuming and misdirection into vehicles for resistance and revelation. This is the first time he has worked in this dual role, organizing the exhibition as a painter would a canvas.

The title of the show originates from the eccentric English author G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), who wrestled with his conviction that we see everything in this world not as it is, but in distortion, "from *behind*." Smiling coyly behind said mask with tongue in cheek, the works in *Shall I tell you...?* delight in carnival-like contradiction: elevating secrets and chagrin into an unfamiliar spotlight.

“Man is not what he thinks he is, he is what he hides.”

- Andre Malraux

Shall I tell you the secret of the whole world? Painting, Parody & Disguise is curated for the CAC by Michael Stillion.

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