

David Hollowell: Light Show

30 Orchard St, Gallery 1 & 2 ▪ May 19 - June 23, 2022



Harkawik is pleased to present *David Hollowell: Light Show*, a survey of the artist's post-2000 studio practice. Recognized as one of the most accomplished painters of his generation, Hollowell works on his own terms, applying his unmistakable brand of hyper-illusionism to a wide array of subjects, themes, and formal concerns. Chief among them is the co-mingling of conceptual painting and decor, of "high art" and the everyday, making the exhibition itself another scene that folds neatly back into the painter's hall of mirrors. His fixations—Americana, including the nuclear family, baseball, dance, recreation, and suburban life; pedigree and hero worship, as seen in pop culture and studio art; phallocentrism and creation myth; profundity masquerading as kitsch; the formal interpenetration of the human figure, sexual or otherwise—are tempered by a sense of humor and irreverence that is rarely well understood in New York.

Light Show focuses on four areas: tape studies, panel paintings, shaped panels, and drawings. Hollowell almost always works from life, which requires the construction of elaborate sets and studies in his studio. This explains uncanny moments, such as the tension between the exhibition's title work, an oil on paperboard painting mounted to panel, and *Green-Green Tape Study* (2010), a shockingly detailed trompe l'oeil painting of an oil on paperboard painting mounted to panel. Originally intended to fit together as a sort of frieze, the tape studies are some of the most direct and accessible of Hollowell's career. The dancers he spent decades pondering with clinical exactitude linger in his brush; now, they're a piece of folded paper, a limpid string, a bit of blue tape hovering in the breeze. He created *Light Show* (2010) by cutting a hole in the wall of his studio, putting a lightbulb back there, and studying the glowing square for months.

Hollowell's figures come from art history, from magazines, from his social world, and from a series of black and white photos he took years ago of strangers lingering in public places, and frequently include members of his own family. There is a fearlessness evident in Hollowell's examination of himself and his clan, a startling willingness to offer up his most cherished relationships to the cold scrutiny of the viewer. In the arresting *Agnes Goes Vertical* (2005), the Hollowell children stare out at us: Lucia, Jack and Adrienne are reposeful with a touch of indignance, while Loie peers beyond the coop. Behind them, three Agnes Martin works of the same period are rotated 90 degrees, reducing Martin's famously specific bands of color to wallpaper, while a fourth runs beneath their feet in ribbons of grey and eggshell. In *Dreamer Boy*, 2002, plinths are used to differentiate: the artist, bearded, glowers at the figures, an art history professor among them; his son Jack is collapsed at their feet.

The pivotal *Lucille (Monochrome)*, from 2006, is an ochre-hued elaboration on a series of works from 2002. What appears to be an anechoic chamber is in fact a hall of nipples; the painting's solitary male character, apparently modeled after "Stan," a guy from Roswell, NM, gazes indifferently at them. This approach—sexual pathology as formal exercise—reaches its apex in Hollowell's latest work on panel: a massive pop-masterpiece titled dryly, *The Penis Flytrap* (2019). Here, the vagina dentata is given a 1970s treatment; the entire panel, including cockeyed alien dental lamp eyes, is illuminated by a little blue egg wedged into a trapezoidal salmon crevice. Its mythology is enacted literally on the viewer, resulting in an inescapable attractive hypnosis. *Character Shelf*, (2010), brings together Hollowell's parallel explorations. Three maroon "shelves" hover impossibly in front of the painting; David is on top, flanked by sepia-tone strangers. Lucia and the painter's older brother Steve, also sepia, are on shelf two, followed by a solitary monochrome Jack. Hollowell reminds us, with a touch of irony, that he made these people, and they made him, in every way imaginable. We're all characters, famous, all artists, all subjects, everybody, nobody.

David Hollowell: Light Show is accompanied by a [hardcover book](#) designed by Claire Hungerford, edition 200, available at our New York gallery and online on June 1.