

HALSEY MCKAY GALLERY

PATRICK BRENNAN - *THE CAGE*

February 17 - March 31 | 79 Newtown Lane, East Hampton, NY

For all further information please contact info@halseymckay.com



Halsey McKay Gallery is pleased to present *The Cage*, Patrick Brennan's fifth solo show with the gallery. In his immersive installation Brennan questions traditionally perceived ideas of the sublime and places us physically within an environment of painted lattice, wooden-palettes, stretcher bar supports, sculptures and paintings. We are confronted with a series of choices and materials that appear chaotic with no fast or easy way to formulate what each art works intends as much of the content is buried. Throughout *The Cage*, works are installed like pockets with layers crammed and buzzing with visual stimulation. The gallery teems with infinite information laying atop and beneath the surface of collage and layered paint. Brennan uses heavily saturated, unearthly colors next to each other to create a specific feeling of newness. His any means necessary approach to materials orchestrates acrylic, latex, spray paint, foam, popsicle sticks, ink, mylar, colored pencils, wood, silk and glitter into a cast of characters in a dream- like landscape. Details of varying finish, texture, and color culminate into a mis-en-scene that is both pedestrian and sophisticated.

Brennan talks about never feeling too comfortable in the natural world, where he knows to expect the unexpected. This unease is how he deals with abstraction as he uses language so vast that he can never fall into the mundane or boring. He remains open to the openness of an artwork in progress and lets the outcome develop on its own accord. Ultimately, it's about the act of making and looking rather than tidy aesthetic conclusions. Brennan explores and investigates every idea that crosses his path, stumbling into chance and wonder and embracing unexpected outcomes. His paintings frequently set people on edge – if that chaos unnerves, then so be it.

GIANNA COMMITO on PATRICK BRENNAN

Patrick Brennan's paintings allow me to finally write about Japanese beach trash. Many years ago, long before cell phones and translation apps and social media afforded us windows into every corner of the world, I visited Japan for the first time. I'd been to lots of other countries, but none where the language and text were so fundamentally different from my own. You use a different set of cognitive skills when visiting a place where you don't completely understand anything that's going on around you. Everything that you're reading, seeing, hearing, and eating is abstract. Wandering in a market, or riding a train, or ordering food, you are required to rely on context and to trust in a shared visual language. What's a snack? What's a beauty product? Do color and texture and scale provide all the information you need to know the difference? Can you name the thing you are seeing?

On that same trip, I visited a beach on the island of Kyushu, too. Like every shore, it was peppered with beach trash tucked among the rocks and shells. Imagine all that foreign, washed up ephemera (which was only semi-recognizable before and now lacks even a whiff of context) after being tossed by the waves and baked in the sun, faded and softened and cracked, edges rounded, encroached upon by barnacles and algae and arthropods. Now tell me what you're looking at!

These dual acts of defamiliarization—of not being able to comprehend words or text and relying solely on visual language to decipher meaning, then having those cues further abstracted by the elements—allow for one to move through a space as though moving through a painting. Every color, material, and mark has something at stake. Combinations of formal components transcend the sum of their parts to eventually (maybe!) provide clarity.

Patrick Brennan's paintings share this pleasure of disorientation and discovery. Mixed media and collage disrupt what we think we are seeing. A shadow shifts and adds another color to the surface, flipping illusionistic space into actual dimension. A delicate star reorganizes into a stack of popsicle sticks, heavy with their own associations. Mundane materials are endlessly reconfigured and re-contextualized, shifting between found object and constructed image. In each rectangle, Patrick creates a novel space with its own language and subsequent gaps in translation. What a wonderful place to feel lost.

– Gianna Commito