

Oliver Clegg

Sometimes, Forever

22 March, 2024 – 4 May, 2024
Ground Floor

MAMOTH is pleased to present '*Sometimes, Forever*', Oliver Clegg's second solo exhibition with the gallery on view from the 22nd of March to the 4th of May, 2024.

Oliver Clegg is the ultimate jester. His aptitude for painterly play and invocations of the medium's history entwine on the makeshift canvases he assembles from scrap wood. They inscribe the work with not only the artist's immediate context, but his interest in the rehabilitative methods of Dadaism. Clegg's style can be directly linked to mid century Spanish painters such as Diego Velázquez and Jusepe de Ribera, the latter figure notable for his Caravaggistic impulse. The implementation of chiaroscuro is also a nod to the efforts of Baroquian players like Rembrandt, whose calculated tenebrism is a consistent point of reference for Clegg. By excavating the medium's past, he proves himself to be a resourceful composer of images.

In these new works, Clegg returns to the Dada approach he implemented during his studies at City & Guilds in London. The use of a school desk, with names carved and drawings scribbled, is inscribed with the ghosts of users past. Having gone through a personal loss at the time, Clegg turned to churches, schools and institutions beyond the limitations of the individual. As such, relatively academic painting is consigned to the recuperative format. A sense of grandiosity is contrasted with throwaway surfaces, as Clegg's formal mastery meets the standards set by objet trouvé artists. This decision is centered around the framework of "discard" in both the physical and psychological realms. Plumbing personal and conceptual histories is staged alongside the absorption of found materials. For this exhibition, aggregated wood planks were pulled from the construction site of the artist's Costa Rican home.

The center of these combines are relatively secure, their outer contours less organized. There are slight decisions in terms of assemblage, keeping within some form of structure, a basic format that lends to both landscape and portraiture. The majority, however, is left to chance. Clegg's painting thus commences without an overwrought concern for surface, toggling the uneven levels in order to create his selection of images. When appraised from different positions under gallery lighting, the viewer meets nodes that counter the flatness of a standard canvas. Practicality and opticality are at the fore of his artistic stance, as he curates the lighting and pictorial situations of his stance.

In his willingness to glide between different compositional frameworks, Clegg finds a singular position within the field of painting. He explores the tensions between tradition and Dadaism. Described by Robert Storr as "picture-plane-puncturing techniques," the umbrella of chiaroscuro is a model that Clegg often returns to. Driven by his own colorblindness, he seeks alternative modes for

composing, ultimately seeing form before colors and engaging with an overwhelmingly earthy palette. Surrealism, too, is expressed through the observation of harmonies and imaginative situations. Clegg sets aspects of daily life slightly askew, like a bottled seascape and armed chicken.

It should be unsurprising that images are of constant concern for the artist. Previous bodies of work revolved around multifarious cat paintings, Happy Meal toys sourced from ebay listings, and cartoon characters in balloon form. In the case of *Sometimes, Forever*, the emotional panoply contained within the painter manifests itself in Clegg's specific image selection process. Rather than stage the exhibition around a particular concept, he delves into subjectivity. Clegg maintains an enthusiastic attitude toward his lot in life. Outlook is everything; as soon as one admits there are more golden eggs on the horizon, good fortune can transpire. Though this proverbial egg is laid by geese, Clegg intends to credit a chicken with his personal kismet. There's also doubt expressed in the painting *Soup of the day*. The owl motif connotes wisdom - false or otherwise - while a pub beer alludes to the building up of courage. The patently artificial strength engendered by intoxication dampens the bird's sapient implication.

The seduction of these paintings is yet another critical facet for Clegg. Through the renderings of risible subjects alongside glass and metal, he weaves humor and desire together, arriving at temperamentally evasive image worlds. In *I'm afraid that idiots can't be hypnotised*, a ceramic heart glistens within the cropped pair of anonymous hands, culminating in attraction and sentimentalism alike. Alternatively, *Give orange me give eat orange me eat orange give me eat orange give me you*, sees its sympathetic protagonist clutches a double-bloomed stem. This monkey appears dejected, but unable to shake his longing for love.

Despite their contrasts, a marked consistency inscribed within Clegg's selection of paintings for *Sometimes, Forever*. A particular rhythm characterizes the show, one that is set by the artist's eccentricities and adroitness.

Text by Reilly Davidson

Artist Bio:

Oliver Clegg (b.1980) Lives and works in Costa Rica.

Costa Rica-based British artist Oliver Clegg has in many ways emerged as a fitting heir to this eclectic tradition of interdisciplinary practice, producing paintings, screen prints, mixed-media works, photography, found objects, sculpture, installation, text-based works, participatory projects and more besides. His materials and methods have involved everything from glass, wood and steel to neon, resin and concrete, weaving and casting to engraving and industrial manufacture. There are oblique nods to Rauschenberg's combines in his paintings on old wooden furniture pan-els, to Kippenberger's hotel drawings in his laser-cut birth certificates, to Holzer's billboards and neon works in his Joshua Tree desert signage, to Gillick's multi-coloured modernist constructions in his mobile furniture installation at Brooklyn Museum, or to Ed Ruscha's text-on-image works in his paintings and screen-print hybrids. These references to - or perhaps strategies learnt from - senior figures known for working across mediums, are absorbed into the artist's own practice both effortlessly and with great aplomb.

Recent solo exhibitions include: "Sometimes, Forever", MAMOTH, London, UK (2024); "EVERYONE HAS A PLAN UNTIL THEY GET PUNCHED IN THE FACE", The Journal Gallery, New York, USA (2023); "Tongue-tied", MAMOTH, London, UK (2022); "Tennis Elbow", Journal Gallery, New York (2019); "Euclid's Porsche" curated by Adam Cohen, Rental Gallery, New York (2018); "Everything should be O.K.", Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai (2018); "Life is a gasssss", Erin Cluley, Dallas, TX, USA (2016) "Games Trathalon Cabinet", Gowanus, New York City, NY, USA (2014); "In the end its not the years in your life that count but the life in your years", Kowal+Odermatt Projects, Miami, FL, USA (2013) Group exhibitions include: "Friends of the Pod", curated by Nate Freedman and Benjamin Godsil, Broadway Gallery, New York, NY, USA (2024); "Drunk and Stoned", curated by Scott Reeder, Elysia Borowy and Max Levi, The Ranch, Long Island, MA, USA (2023); "Stranger Things", here gallery, Pittsburg, PA, USA (2022); "Exhibition 11", PM/AM, London, UK (2021); "Good Pictures" curated by Austin Lee and Jeffrey Deitch, Deitch Projects, New York, NY, USA (2020); "More or Less" curated by Darren Bader, Sadie Coles HQ, London, UK (2018) and "The Cruellest Month", Mother Gallery, Beacon, NY (2018).

His work has been presented at the Prague, Busan and Venice biennales, and in museums such as the Reykjavik Museum of Modern art, Iceland; DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic; Saatchi Gallery, London, UK and MODEM Centre for Modern and Contemporary Arts, Debrecen, Hungary.

His works have been acquired for the Maleki Collection, Faisal Tamer, the Zabłudowicz Collection, the David and Indré Roberts Collection, the Charles Riva Collection, CCA, Alex Katz Foundation, Susanne Van Hagen, Deutsche Bank and the Neidich Family Collection, among others.

GROUND FLOOR:

1.
*In my previous life I was
 a pyroclast, 2024*
 Oil on wood
 83.8 x 80 cm
 33 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ in

2.
*Black cat white cat
 (Psicología in- versa) 2024*
 Oil on wood
 77.5 x 70 cm
 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ in

3.
Good as gold, 2024
 Oil on wood
 134.6 x 122 cm
 53 x 48 in

4.
*Give orange me give eat
 orange me eat orange give
 me eat orange give me
 you, 2024*
 Oil on wood
 100 x 81 cm
 35 x 26 $\frac{3}{8}$ in

5.
Soup of the day, 2024
 Oil on wood
 114.3 x 97.8cm
 44 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 38 $\frac{5}{8}$ in

6.
*There's a time I can
 recall Four years old and
 three feet tall Trying to
 touch the stars and the
 cookie jar and both were
 out of reach, 2024*
 Oil on wood
 100 x 70cm
 31 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ in

GROUND FLOOR:

