

*Parker Ito*  
*'The Pilgrim's Sticky Toffee*  
*Pudding Gesamtkunstwerk*  
*in the Year of the Dragon,*  
*À La Mode'*  
*2 Nov – 14 Dec 2024*

*Rose Easton*

## A Beautiful Machine by Philippa Snow

A hummingbird will, on average, flap its wings 4,000 times a minute, making it impossible to see them beating clearly with the naked eye. Trapped in his Hollywood apartment during the pandemic, Parker Ito began to notice hummingbirds congregating on his balcony. With the world shut down, he learned their schedule, and routinely photographed them with an outmoded, early-noughties camera, before turning the resulting images into a series of paintings that muddled figuration and abstraction – figurative in the sense that they were being reproduced exactly as they appeared in Ito’s digital shots, and abstract in the sense that their ultra-fast movements sometimes left them without finished outlines, as if in places they were the *idea* of a bird. I open by mentioning these paintings in part because Ito has suggested that the inspiration for *The Pilgrim’s Sticky Toffee Pudding Gesamtkunstwerk in the Year of the Dragon, Á la Mode* began with his avian portraits, and in part because the image of him organising his life around these tiny, speedy creatures crystallises for me certain notions that I have about the figure of the artist: a person who, in devoting themselves to the documentation of things that might otherwise exist beyond their audience’s perception, successfully collapses space and time; experience and image; nature and technology.

Is the artist an animal, like a hummingbird, or a tool, like a camera? Ideally, they are both: sensitive and awake to their surroundings, and adept at filtering their experience through the medium of their choice. Sometimes, the medium in question is itself selected as a conceptual gesture. At the same time that Ito was producing his paintings of birds, he also started to make sculptural pieces using scanners, noting parallels between the frantic, high-speed light flashes of transferring data, and the way that the hummingbird's swiftly beating wings are received by the brain – another example of accuracy looking, at a glance, more like abstraction. Those scanners appear in *The Pilgrim's Sticky Toffee Pudding Gesamtkunstwerk*, hacked to perform colourful lightshows on twenty-minute cycles: still capturing data, but retaining it in a format that is wholly inaccessible. Alongside them are images that are created when two of them *scan each other*, a dizzying feedback loop of visual information whose results are simultaneously created at a remove from direct human intervention, and reflective of manmade abstract art. Elsewhere, Ito has run a painted diptych through an inkjet printer, having first layered it with modelling paste and cut-and-paste vinyl, until it has blossomed and bled into a many-layered, dreamily impressionistic style. Everywhere you look, boundaries are collapsing, and what Ito is interested in is the rich, nebulous space that remains post-collapse: between mechanisation and craft, and between abstract and figurative representation, leaving room for something new and elastic.

## *In The Pilgrim's Sticky Toffee Pudding*

*Gesamtkunstwerk*, Ito also collapses time in a literal sense, re-appropriating images of pilgrims, saints and martyrs, and drawing parallels between our own use of digital technology for documentation, and the advent of the Camera Obscura. The sharing of data was of paramount concern for mankind long before we were doing so in binary code, and if the ideas being communicated and the modes through which we are communicating them have evolved, the principle is more or less the same. The opprobrium that sometimes greets contemporary artists who use the Internet as a medium finds its equivalent in the outrage that tends to meet the mere suggestion that some of our greatest painters might have used the Obscura as a tool. Ito has long been interested in ideas around the pitting of style against substance, and the value that is placed on beauty in the art world. When he executes a self-portrait dressed as a knight, he is winkingly imbuing himself with a built-in form of art-historical nobility; by recording himself asking the question "Why am I so beautiful?" and then running the audio through a MIDI converter, he's performing the opposite trick, since it is easier for us to associate beauty with a living thing than it is for us to think of an alluring computer. "I heard that Picasso made around 250,000 works in his lifetime. I could make that many jpegs in five years," the *Wall Street Journal* once quoted him saying. "And when I say five years, I mean five minutes." It is the ideal Ito line: archly funny in a way that perfectly elucidates his hyper-contemporary, un-precious attitude to the

dissemination of images and ideas. In the span of five minutes, a hummingbird will flap its wings approximately 20,000 times, and yet this repetition does not make a single one of these 20,000 gestures less significant or necessary. How many brushstrokes on average, I wonder, did Picasso use to fill a canvas? And when he executed them, did he ever feel like a beautiful machine?

Parker Ito (b. 1986, Ventura, California, USA) lives and works in Los Angeles. He has had solo and two-person exhibitions at The Community, Paris; Bel Ami, Los Angeles; Lubov, New York; MASSIMODECARLO, Paris; mother's tankstation, London; Château Shatto, Los Angeles; Galeria Mascota, Mexico City; Team Gallery, New York and Los Angeles; Beijing Art Now Gallery, Beijing; Holiday Forever, Jackson; Smart Objects, Los Angeles; White Cube, London; amongst many others. Ito's work has been included in group exhibitions at Clark Institute, Williamstown; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing; Air de Paris, Paris; Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver; Times Museum, Guangzhou; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Baku; ICA London, London; The Moving Museum, Dubai; NTT InterCommunication Center, Tokyo; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; amongst many others. Ito's work is part of the following collections: Aishti Foundation, Beirut; X Museum, Beijing; Booth School of Business, Chicago; Rachofsky Collection, Dallas; Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing; Domus Collection, New York; The Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; YUZ Museum, Shanghai; New Century Art Foundation, Shanghai; PCP Collection, Taipei and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin.

## Entrance

Parker Ito

*The Agony and the Ecstasy*

2024

Ink

Dimensions variable

## Gallery

Parker Ito

*The Pilgrim's Sticky*

*Toffee Pudding*

*Gesamtkunstwerk,*

*in the Year of the Dragon,*

*À La Mode, part 2, 2024*

Ink, acrylic, modelling,

paste, water soluble

pastel, ink aid,

GAC 100, paper and

varnish on canvas

203 × 305 × 3 cm

Parker Ito

*The Pilgrim's Sticky*

*Toffee Pudding*

*Gesamtkunstwerk,*

*in the Year of the Dragon,*

*À La Mode (scanner*

*sculpture), 2024*

Modified photo colour

scanner, glass, effects

pedals, laptop, cables,

extension cord, speakers,

projector, colour slides

and slide projector

Dimensions variable

**Private View, Friday 1 November, 6 – 8pm**  
**Open, Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6pm**

**For general and sales enquiries,**  
**info@roseeaston.com**

**For press enquiries,**  
**fabian@strobella.com**

**Rose Easton**  
**223 Cambridge Heath Road**  
**London E2 0EL**  
**+44 (0)20 4529 6393**  
**@roseeaston223**  
**www.roseeaston.com**