

**Chason Matthams**

*Agape in the Spectrum*

May 16–June 29, 2024

Level One

Magenta Plains is pleased to present *Agape in the Spectrum*, Chason Matthams' second solo exhibition with the gallery comprised of new paintings varying in scale. *Agape in the Spectrum* continues Matthams visual vocabulary with expanded investigations of natural objects encountering art historical references alongside his idiosyncratic renderings of cameras and corsages. The works included in this exhibition combine Matthams' intense study of color and form, along with his ongoing interest in the valence of symbols across the boundaries of time and culture.

The works in *Agape in the Spectrum* are broken in two categories: Matthams' characteristically meticulous "portraits" of cameras, and his renderings of organic objects staged in front of images from the art historical canon. The interplay between these bodies of work forms the theoretical background for this exhibition. Each camera is "paired" with an organic object of a matching shade and hue. For example, *Untitled (Rolleiflex, green)* and *Oyster Shell w/ Anthony Van Dyck's Drunken Silenus supported by Satyrs (blue)* both share the same palette of atmospheric greens and blues. This matching of color spectrums implies a moment of capture from the perspective of the camera, and a suggestion that these paintings represent two objects in the same physical space, although they are divided by the edges of their respective canvases. Collectively, these color-matched pairs form a full spectrum of shades in the entire exhibition, implying that they are pieces of one whole.

The cameras are a long-standing pillar of Matthams' painting, visually representing an instinct to classify and categorize. While the cameras represented are both vintage and contemporary, they can be located within a specific time period of cultural production, and are placed within controlled geometric environments devoid of additional signification. In contrast, the paintings of organic objects have a feeling of reaching out towards broader associations, via the larger ecosystems they have been pulled from. There are delicate flower corsages in their crystalline plastic cases, oyster shells displaying their pearlescent interiors, and geodes rippling with patterned, effervescent surface strata. The organic paintings' contrast to the cameras is further emphasized by their art historical backgrounds, which point to a grander arc of cultural evolution than the relatively abbreviated changes in camera technology evoked in Matthams' paintings. Taken together, this dichotomy ebbs towards two very different time frames: one contemporary and condensed and the other expansive and historical.

Central to Matthams' practice is his interest in how symbols shift in meaning and evolve across periods of time. By setting the contemporary cameras next to natural objects, the viewer is prompted to consider the meaning we project onto the object versus the information that is presented within it. Have the cameras imprinted their color spectrum onto the objects or taken on the colors of the objects they lay their attention over? There is a mutual, symbiotic change across both beholder and the beheld. This exchange calls to mind the bodily nature of these paintings, as objects organic and artificial exist in a shared universe. The sinuous curve of an oyster shell or the plump petals of a chrysanthemum seem to mirror the lovingly rendered knobs and orifices of each camera, rendering them living and voyeuristic. These pairs take on an almost lustful cast, joined by color spectrum but forever sheared from each other by the edges of each canvas. Taken as a whole, Matthams' *Agape*

*in the Spectrum* is both a meditation on our perception of symbols, the feedback loop of culture which informs their development, as well as a formal investigation into the minutiae of color theory and painterly composition.

Chason Matthams' focus is on capturing the ephemeral experience of consciousness and pointing to its fragmentary nature. While at first glance his paintings seem to be contemplative experiments in mimesis, prolonged looking reveals threatening undertones. Matthams' employs specific combinations of colors, angles of perspective, and exhaustive detail to anthropomorphize each of his subjects, rendering them just barely sinister. Flitting between mechanical and organic objects, Matthams' exacting brushwork is the connective thread leading our eye through every sumptuous detail.

Matthams graduated with a BFA in Fine Art from New York University in 2004 and an MFA from New York University in 2012. Previous solo and two person exhibitions include Independent New York with Stan VanDerBeek, Magenta Plains, New York, NY (2023), *Glimpse*, Magenta Plains, New York, NY (2022); *two*, Tyler Wood Gallery, San Francisco, CA (2013, 2019); *Advances, None Miraculous*, Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New York, NY (2015); and *A Hell for Rainbows*, Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New York, NY (2019).

Previous group exhibitions include *Beyond the Pale*, Interstate, Brooklyn, NY (2014); *Break Out*, Frédéric de Goldschmidt Collection, Brussels, Belgium (2015); Cynthia Daignault's *The Certainty of Others*, Flag Art Foundation, New York, NY (2017); *L'IM\_MAGE\_N*, Ashes/Ashes, New York, NY (2017); *Stockholm Sessions*, Carl Koystal, Stockholm, Sweden (2021); *Nature Morte*, The Hole, New York, NY (2021), *Blossom*, Tong Art Advisory, Shenzhen, CN (2021), and *Rainbow Country*, VSOP Projects, Greenport, NY (2023).