

Days Like This

Maximilian Arnold

27 March – 27 April 2024

Gratin is happy to present *Days Like This* Maximilian Arnolds' first New York solo show.

New modes of communication alter the roles of their predecessors but rarely replace them entirely. Taking the time to write a letter by hand carries added significance in the era of email, texts, and direct messages. To choose a labor intensive medium is an act of devotion, and its inherent duration also makes possible a type of meaning which cannot be compressed. With cameras, printers, screens, and projectors readily at hand, what is it we need from handmade pictures? Painting's stubborn physicality provides something increasingly valuable in the era of image saturation: the means to conjure a vision that speaks to the whole body.

Maximilian Arnold makes paintings full of fragmented space—pictures that undo themselves in front of our eyes. Colorful gradients suggest sensual volumes that compete with flat, graphic marks which rupture this illusion. Neither one gives up its claim on the surface and we are left to wonder what kind of world contains these contradictory assertions. Arnold welcomes dissonance into the frame and the resulting works feel at once declarative and strange—confident and wandering. These paintings deploy the logic of collage to create invented spaces without legible references. Despite not resembling nameable phenomena or objects, these works feel like the world around us: raucous, mysterious, alluring.

Arnold's heavily layered compositions draw upon a personal archive of imagery, but he transforms these ingredients to an extent that their origin becomes indecipherable. The force of his work derives from the new relationships that form between these discordant elements. In this sense, the real subject of these paintings is the act of transformation itself. By combining pieces of existing images, Arnold enriches the potency of these elements by forging new connections between previously disconnected fragments. This alchemical process invests new energy into discarded scraps of visual culture, and proposes that there is still more to see even within the familiar territory of abstraction.

The time and labor required to sustain Arnold's practice puts it at odds with our culture's fixation with productivity and time-saving technologies. Instead of efficiency, these paintings offer an extended confrontation with our own subjectivity. They are as impactful as we allow them to be, and give us back as much pleasure as we are willing to invest in the form of patience. This exchange of energy does not correspond to any practical need, and cannot be flattened into the more convenient container of a photograph. The nourishment that these paintings provide is not 'useful', it is essential to sustaining the vibrance of the imagination during an era of unprecedented manipulation.

Text by Peter Brock