

Charles Mayton

Frame Play

February 8 - April 6, 2025

The task of the right eye is to peer into the telescope, while the left eye peers into the microscope.

Leonora Carrington

Keep this quote in mind. Not just for this writing and the exhibition it supports, but in all things. While such a statement may or may not be true, imagine its duality the next time you are looking at something that piques your curiosity, enchants you, or seduces you. Or maybe if you see something that you don't entirely understand. Or, better yet, when you encounter something that you thought you understood all along, something as simple as a still life.

In *Frame Play*, Charles Mayton activates various readings of the word 'frame' with two distinct elements. The first is an illustration that he found, unceremoniously photographed, and tacked to his studio wall in 2017. The drawing depicts a domestic scene in which a dog, positioned with its back to the viewer, appears to be pawing towards an ornately framed still life of fruit. Mayton's finding of this illustration coincided with the discovery of a pair of discarded canvases, which he then reassembled into a schematic wall construction, mimicking a perspectival interior akin to his studio space. This schematic form appears throughout many of Mayton's earlier works, both as a motif and a way of marking the space within painting itself as a site of performative exchange. It is Mayton's engagement with these found materials that has generated the two bodies of work in this exhibition: *interior drifts* and *frame play*.

For *interior drifts i-vii*, Mayton puts the schematic wall construction to work. In these paintings, he creates a series of perspectival interiors which decenter the finished painting as an object of consumption, foregrounding instead the relational matrix within which the painting is created. Like enigmatic screensaver images growing larger, then smaller in size, overdetermined objects (a fruit still life, a penny, a broken window) drift into and out of states of de- or re-formation. These liminal moments possess an uncanny glow, as if they are lit from within, perhaps due to their passage through several stages of digital-analog processes in their construction, sharing material relations with photography and film/video.

Taken as the title for the show, *frame play i-iii* use Mayton's photograph of the found dog illustration as his point of departure, complicating historically charged dynamics of looking and desire. Playing with the triangular relations between dog, still life, and viewer, Mayton recasts these subject-object narratives in myriad color saturated iterations which resist singular interpretation. Rather, interpretive possibilities accrete. Caught in what psychoanalyst Jameison Webster refers to as an "infinite regress of looking," the viewer peers over the dog's shoulder, substituting the hidden gaze of the dog's with their own. It is now the viewer longing for a taste of the still life's illusory fruit, while the still life's frame itself, referencing art historical masterpieces, adorns the vanitas. As in *interior drifts*, perception is taken as its own subject here, as each painting attempts, impossibly, to capture the quality of its unfolding.

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