

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Guy Diehl

Art About Art: A Luminous Pursuit II

November 5—28, 2020

Dolby Chadwick Gallery is pleased to announce *Art About Art: A Luminous Pursuit II*, an exhibition of new paintings by Guy Diehl.

Over the course of his career, Diehl has mastered a style of realism that deftly conjures the world without simply mirroring it. With this body of work, the artist expands upon a long-running series that uses the still life format to explore different moments in art history. As “art about art,” the paintings feature an assemblage of objects—often centered and seen from eye level—mediated by art-historical references. Diehl is particularly interested in modern art movements, such as Russian avant-gardism and Cubism, and the explosive intellectual developments of the turn of the twentieth century that set the stage for the modern era.

He typically chooses objects that are simple and unadorned, shying away from the branded and nostalgic artifacts that preoccupied Pop Art. Inhabiting his compositions are bottles and jars in different shapes and colors, cubes, cue balls, boxes, glass spheres, seashells, and mysterious wrapped packages and sealed envelopes, among other objects. References to art history are introduced via postcards of famous paintings, book covers and spines, even cigar boxes—Duchamp allegedly smoked the Punch brand of cigar featured in *Still Life with Cigar Box (PUNCH)* (2018). In *Conversation with Egon Schiele* (2019), the black and white latticed seashell is a reference to Rembrandt, who created a copperplate etching of a similar shell; Diehl places it here in dialogue with an Egon Schiele portrait of a nude woman, seen from behind as she adjusts her blue headscarf. It is an unexpected pairing, and yet the shell—a symbol of the feminine—underscores the Schiele portrait, which itself plays into the looking-glass-cum-crystal-ball effect of the nearby marble. This spherical object flips and reflects the portrait back to the viewer along with other objects in Diehl’s composition—and perhaps even some elements that exist outside the picture plane and beyond the current moment.

The reflective details within Diehl’s paintings would not be possible without light. And light, Diehl notes, is first and foremost what his work is about. Light can take something ordinary and make it extraordinary. In the works of Caravaggio, a pioneer of chiaroscuro, a scene and the objects within it come to life through the interplay of light, color, and shadow. For Diehl, the power of a composition is dependent on this relationship and its expressive potential, which heightens the drama of his paintings’ cascading symmetry and links the objects together through visual echoing and shadow-play. In addition to creating visual magic, light—as this body of work

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continues to demonstrate—can also evoke strong and sometimes unexpected emotional responses to the subject matter.

Guy Diehl was born in 1949, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He earned a BA from California State University Hayward in 1973 and an MA from San Francisco State University in 1976. Diehl has exhibited extensively across the United States and, among his accolades, was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Fresno Art Museum in 2018. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, the Cantor Arts Center in Palo Alto, the San Jose Museum of Art, the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, and the Oakland Museum of California. This exhibition celebrates his fifth solo show and tenth anniversary with the Dolby Chadwick Gallery.