

Nolan Simon

Polyamory

October 29–December 18, 2021

The concept of “envelopment,” as explored in Derek P. McCormack’s book *Atmospheric Things*, describes substances like air, for instance, not as immaterial, but as a relational substance. In “Polyamory,” Nolan Simon’s fourth solo exhibition at 47 Canal, paintings develop an ensemble of strange associations, exploring echoes and slippages, and revealing the intimacies of an unfixed world.

A rich and idiosyncratic realm is stitched together through prosaic scenes and unorthodox rituals dramatized by the artist and his friends, partners, and colleagues. A glass of fresh goat’s milk, a preserved duck egg, an affogato—each painting is the result of a manufactured image, assuming the viewer’s presence, proximity, and participation.

Five brass instruments break the picture plane of *Venice Cornu*. In a synesthetic play of light and sound, the horns’ rippling surfaces and deep shadows suggest exuberant volume, then dampened by ornate touches such as a player’s engraved wedding ring, white marble inserts, and a swathe of patterned fabric. Given a closer look, the gleaming metallic instruments reflect an image of the artist at work in the studio with easel and camera stand in range. Inspired by the tale of the Battle of Jericho, a flashpoint in scholarly attempts to uncover the historical reality of biblical narratives, the work exemplifies the alluring consonance and difficulty in the making of myth and history.

Traditional technique such as *imprimatura* is reanimated through Simon’s employment of printed under-layers and built up surfaces. Playing within the gaps of illusion and reality, variegated patterns and textures convey the saturation of our contemporary image flows. The painting *Pots and Pants*, which features a cabinet of kitchen utensils and BDSM gear crowned by a pinned pair of plastic underwear, calls back the tradition of domestic *trompe l’oeil* still-life and leaves each object tottering between discrete categories. By contrast, in *Curl Oeuvre Oeuf Oof*, the accumulation of brushwork gives way to a dense co-mingling of wiry gray beards on which a century egg is nested and cradled by the tongues of two men licking each side.

Nolan Simon (b. 1980) has shown extensively in Europe and the United States. Recent solo exhibitions include: “What Pipeline,” Detroit; and 47 Canal, New York. Recent group exhibitions include “The Rest” at Lisson Gallery, New York and “Techniques of the Obeserver” at Greene Naftali, New York.