

MATT HANSEL – REVERENCE & REVERIE [ARTIST TO WATCH]

By Dustin Hollywood / November 16, 2015 / Exhibitions / Installations, Interview, Interviews, Painting, { ARTIST TO WATCH } / One comment



Currently exhibiting at The Lodge Gallery in New York, Matt Hansel brings the Renaissance into the 21st century through image manipulation and decontextualization. I got a chance to chat with him over this show and his past works, looking at the man behind the paintings. These personal insights bring Hansel's paintings into a new light, conceptualizing the greats by anonymity. The images featured in this interview are a conglomeration of Hansel's work from past and current exhibitions. Check out his work at Reverence & Reverie showing at The Lodge Gallery. While you're there, be sure to check out the speakeasy bar in the back of the gallery.

How has your style changed over your career?

I think it's more helpful to think of modes of image making as a means to an end. If you think of the way something is made as integral to its conceptual underpinnings, you realize that the way you make a conceptual object has to be specific to that object. Therefore, different conceptual objects will always require and demand their own way of being made. So, instead of a style that changes to keep up with current trends, I try and find a mode of image making that supports the concept of every object I make.

Were you always influenced by the Renaissance?

I am more intrigued by the way we interact with historical objects, art in particular. I like to think of art history as a stream which every artist enters during their own time period. This stream of art and artists is continually growing and increasing in volume. Within this stream, the new inevitably mixes with the old and vice versa. The more art that is created, the more our perceptions about art changes. Which in turn affects the way we see artists that entered the stream long ago. In this way, the new influences the old as much as the old influences the new. This is one of the things I love most about art.

How do you choose which works to reimagine?

I have recently been attracted to European paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries, especially self-portraits. I like the earnestness with which the artists depict themselves. There seems to be a real longing to be remembered in the self-portraits of these eras. The artists imbue the work with as much technical virtuosity as possible to ensure that future generations will value it and take care of it. Which, in many cases they have. I like the concept of sending an object out into the world as your proxy, hoping it will live forever. It's a beautiful idea. The need to be seen and remembered is something I think we can all relate to.

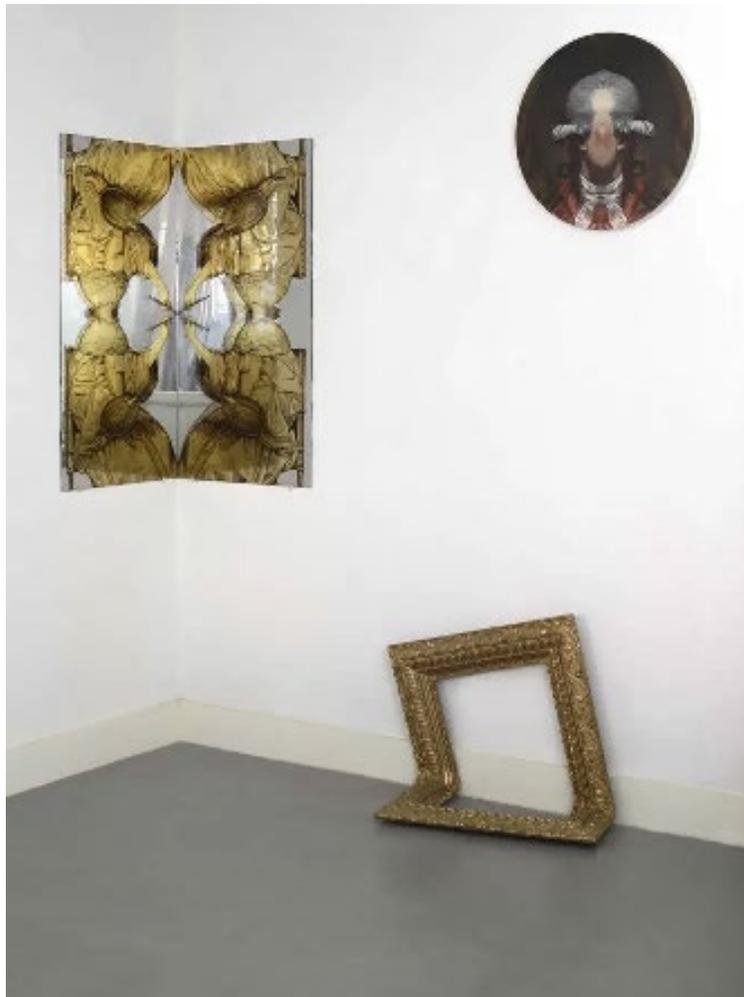


Many of your works exclude the face of the artist or subject, why do you choose to remove that from your paintings?

By re-enacting the practice of the artist who once was, I attach my own intentions. I duplicate, double, mirror and repeat images over and over until they have been stripped of their original identity. This occurs to both the physical representation of the artist as well as the artist's intentions. This multiplying also introduces the idea of recursion. Recursion is the process of repeating items in a self-similar way. For instance, when two mirrors are placed facing one another allowing an image to reflect infinitely between them. This recursion allows me to deconstruct ideas associated with what is supposed to be "original" or "authentic."

What's the significance of the melting frames?

Part of what I'm doing is re-contextualizing an antiquated form of painting. I'm taking it out of the museum setting and introducing it to the white box of the gallery. In doing so, the work sheds some of its former attributes. I like to think of the frames as remnants of its previous life. These remnants have been shed and left to decay.

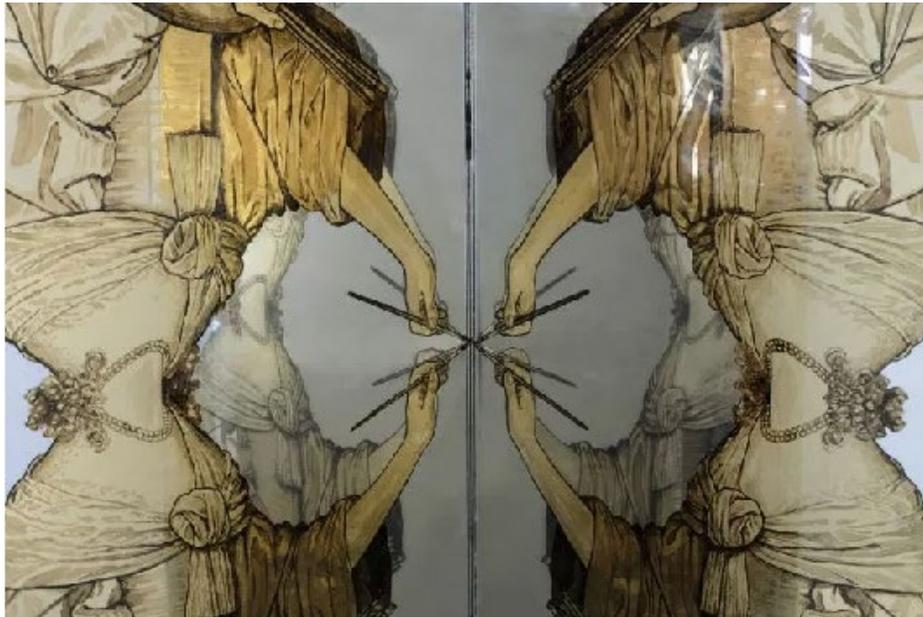


What's the most challenging part of creating your paintings?

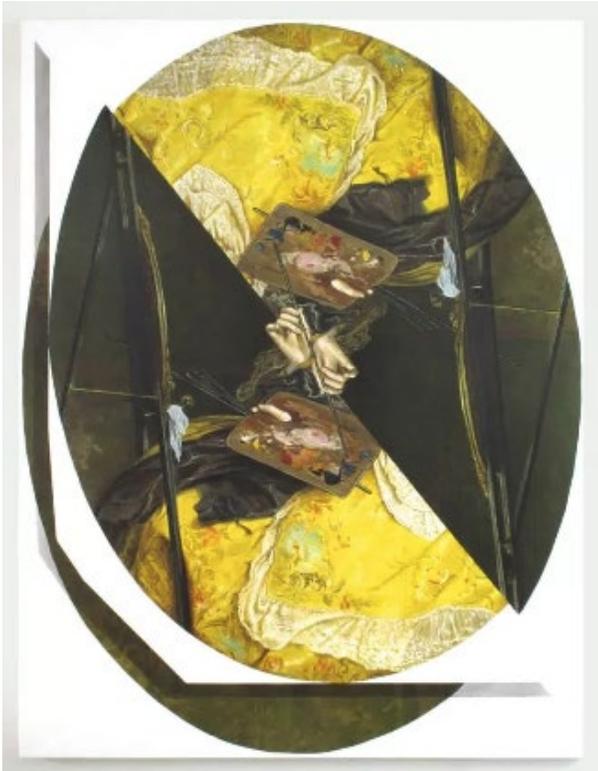
I think finding the precarious balance between form and content is always the most difficult thing to accomplish. In order for a piece to fully function, both things must be working in tandem.

Craft by itself means very little. As evidenced by the fact that there are so many well made objects out there that we don't think twice about. Craft is a hollow veneer that often looks great but leaves you quickly.

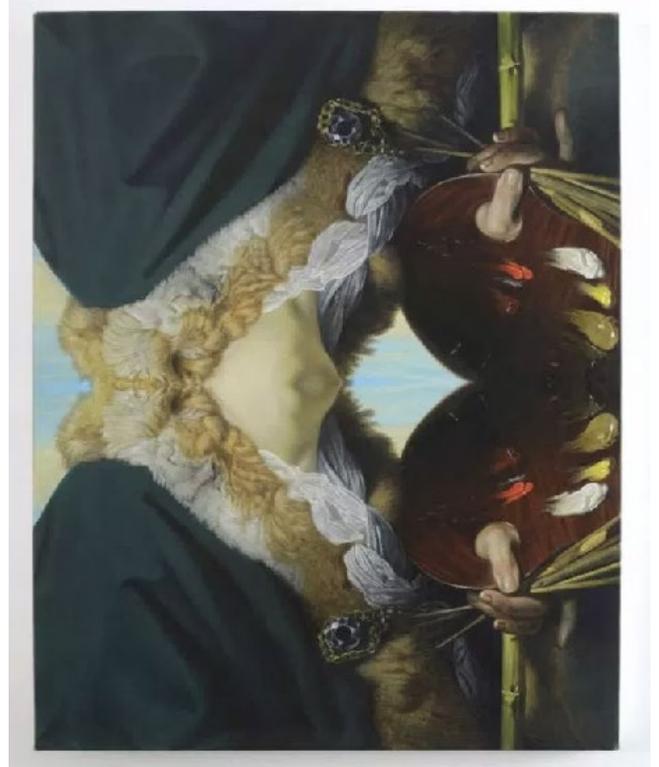
Ideas by themselves are just that. They are ephemeral and need a vessel. They need a delivery system. This creates a perfect symbiotic relationship between form and content. One is balanced by the other. But, it's a hard balance to strike.



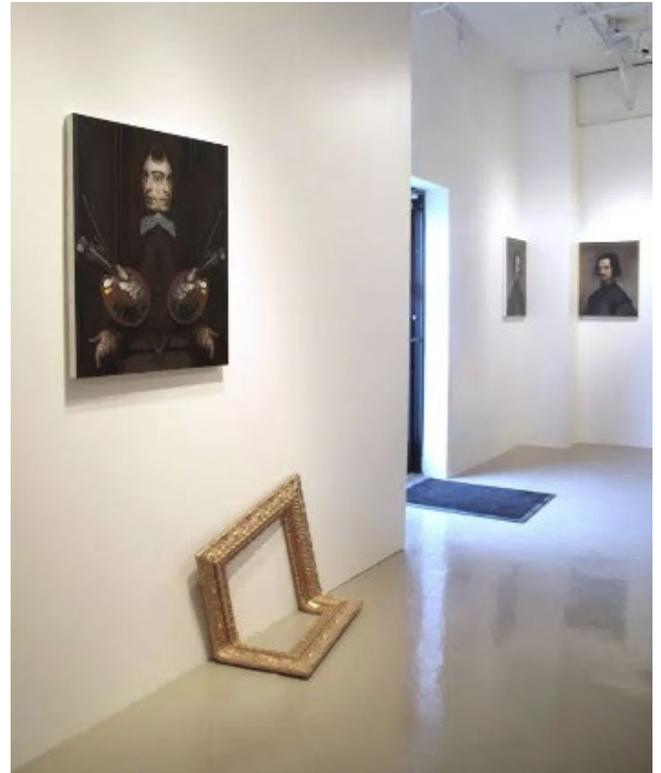
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