

Adams and Ollman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Paul Lee:
Tambourine Heart
April 24—May 22, 2021



In collaboration with Karma, New York, and co-organized with Ellen Langan, Adams and Ollman is pleased to announce a solo exhibition with artist Paul Lee on view at the gallery from April 24 through May 22, 2021. The exhibition, “Tambourine Heart,” features a new series of collages made from Lee’s distinct index of materials.

Since the late 1990s, Lee’s artistic output has often blurred the distinctions between sculpture, drawing, collage, and painting. Characterized by a palpable presence of the hand, the artist’s ongoing formal experimentation and investigation of materiality returns to the same functional objects rendered into reliquary. Imbuing material experience of the familiar with an undeniable numinousness and wonder, Lee’s formal language bends toward subversive, emotional and poetic ends.

Incorporating the practice of collage-making as a daily ritual this past year, Lee constructed these works from the existing archive of materials on hand in his studio. Beginning with a ground of painted paper, then applying remnants of hand-dyed towels, canvas splattered with paint or mimicking the circumference of a tambourine, cutouts of photos, and window screens, these works convey both past use and aesthetic potential. “Tambourine Heart” marks the first time Lee has exhibited collages in over 15 years.

Collage stands as a metaphor for material improvisation. In these new works—larger in scale than the intimate collages from his past—Lee shifts the various components in a process of non-linear play, reconfiguring notions of

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identity and meaning. Viewers are invited to toggle between expectation and ambiguity, to confront the body's simultaneous presence and absence. Towels touch the body, the screen obscures it. Painted bath towels unite to form a horizon line, one between wet or dry, body and landscape, or earth and sky. An echo of a tambourine's surface, displaced from its use, now forms a planetary body or black hole. The artist's evocative signature color palette remains intentional: for Lee, color is fundamental to the experiences around us. Reds, blacks, lavenders, and greens reference desire, longing, death, water, and landscape—such associations and interpretations are always semiotic, various and shifting.

These works incorporate another constant for Lee—a single found photograph of an idealized face of a man. The artist dissects this image, cutting it into perfect circles that isolate fragments of flesh, nose, ears and lips, while at other times collaging over the face's whole. This pathos bends to the circle as a universal symbol of perfection and for Lee, a stand-in for a tambourine bell rendered silent. That idealized face is often doubled and mirrored, hiding behind a world of abstracted shape, color and form.

The compositions in the exhibition appear as self-contained worlds that do not resolve. Rather, they reveal a key thread or narrative throughout Lee's work—one that explores the places of transition between public and private, mind and body, body and world, connection and separation, restraint and desire, the place of tending to both what remains and to what can be anew.

Paul Lee (b. 1974, London, UK) lives and works in New York. Recent exhibitions include David Shelton Gallery, Houston (2020); Karma, New York (2019); Modern Art, London (2018); Michael Lett, New Zealand (2017); Jeffrey Stark, New York (2016); Maccarone, Los Angeles (2016); Untilthen, Paris (2015); and University of the Arts, Philadelphia (2015).

Above:

Paul Lee

Red, 2021

aluminum screen, printed image, staples, spray paint and acrylic paint on paper

24 x 19 inches

60.96 x 48.26 centimeters

PL-21-008