

Matt Connors: Positions

June 21–August 9, 2024

Opening Reception: Friday, June 21, 2024, 6–7:30 PM

Ortuzar Projects is pleased to present *Positions*, the gallery's first solo exhibition with New York and Los Angeles-based artist Matt Connors (b. 1973).

In a series of new drawings and paintings in acrylic and oil, Connors continues his experimentations in abstraction, transforming images from the world around him through fragmentation, accumulation, shifts in color and scale, and distortions in perspective. The exhibition title, *Positions*, could be interpreted along the lines of "taking a side," whether that be politically or artistically. While Connors is known for both his longstanding commitment to abstraction and engagement with matters outside the realm of art, his paintings may be characterized precisely by their ambiguity. Pulling details freely from textiles, pottery shards, stencils, found images, or elements from graphic design, Connors' work dialogues as much with questions of formalism as it does with the photographic or referential.

Taking a position requires having a point of view; a positionality, so to speak, that implies an active participation and reciprocal engagement with the world. The plurality of the title is reflected in Connors recursive, open-ended process, in which paintings or drawings in the studio become studies for further compositions and references are abandoned mid-painting as guides. In *Macaw Shard with Void* (2024), Connors begins through observational study of a glazed pottery shard designed by Clarice Cliff, the art-deco English ceramicist known for her vividly patterned designs. Shrapnel from a past cultural moment, these fragments' cheerful palette is less nostalgic than anachronistic, odd. With thickly built-up surfaces, these new paintings have an accumulative density that at times collapses in on itself. In many instances this takes the form of a black hole that seems to puncture the composition, obliterating the underpainting on top of which it lies.

To hide from view or to obfuscate is an exercise in longing, in desire. *Positions*, of course, has an erotics to it. The many positions one can take with another implies a durational game, a flip-flopping between, a movement through, as well as a settling into. In works such as *Erik's (sic) Trip* (2024), Connors' application of paint is neither expressionistic nor a faithful transcription of a source image, existing obliquely as both paint and more than paint, or perhaps as an attunement to the difference. As opposed to the often-cold remove of modernism, Connors' paintings are of the world, correlating the pleasure of the painterly process with that of seeing, noticing, selecting, touching, turning over and transforming. His practice systematically archives an ongoing train of thought, a conversation between the artist and the world of images, objects, and ideas around him that is deeply personal, social, and ever-changing.

Matt Connors received a B.F.A. from Bennington College, Vermont (1995) and an M.F.A. from Yale University, New Haven (2006). Earlier this year he was the subject of a solo exhibition at Goldsmiths CCA, *Finding Aid*, in which he placed his work in dialogue with that of twenty-two other artists. Connors was included in the Whitney Biennial 2022: *Quiet as It's Kept*. Solo exhibitions include *Tune*, Herald Street, London (2023); *Finder*, the Modern Institute, Glasgow (2023); *Body Forth* (with Ryan Preciado), Canada, New York (2022); *Swap*, Xavier Hufkins, Brussels (2021); *Impressionism*, MoMA PS1, New York (2012); and *Gas...Telephone...One Hundred Thousand Rubles*, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Germany (2011). His work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas; and National Gallery of Art, Canberra, Australia, among others. Connors received a 2012 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, was a 2015 Artist in Residence at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas, and most recently, was awarded the Award of Merit Medal in Painting at the 2024 American Academy of Arts and Letters Awards.