



Van Maltese

Fact or Fiction

June 18 - July 24, 2021

COOPER COLE is pleased to present *Fact or Fiction*, a solo exhibition of the work of Toronto-based artist Van Maltese.

In their practice, Maltese is interested in questions of visual and cognitive perception, specifically pareidolia—the psychological phenomenon in which recognizable patterns are identified in unrelated contexts. Each of the new works in *Fact or Fiction*—which include painting, sculpture, and video—deploy varied forms of visual trickery as a way of questioning the relationship between perception and truth.

Maltese's painterly images combine both trompe l'oeil and flat planes of colour, a technique that challenges the desire for illusion associated with the history of painting. Using familiar patterns and shapes, Maltese explores the psychoanalytic connections between pattern recognition and the subconscious. In their *Desk* series, the artist's paintings resemble messy table tops and are framed by table legs mounted to the walls. Her emphatic play between realism and the absurd provides an opening for viewers to understand her inquiries into the concept of truth. In addition, Maltese provides moments that acknowledge the psychological aspect of cognitive perception, for example by reproducing Joseph Jastrow's 'Duck-Rabbit' and Edgar Rubin's 'Vase Illusion', in some cases uncannily appearing to be on taped up sheets of paper.

These inquiries extend into Maltese's sculptural practice, in which the artist creates realistic replicas of mundane objects. For *Fact or Fiction*, Maltese has created a series of slightly larger than life-sized house flies made of oxidized silver and adhered them sporadically onto surfaces in the gallery. Referencing the famous story of Giotto's fly—which was considered a symbol of death and plague at the time—Maltese taps into the visceral effects of visual trickery, gesturing to its sensationalizing potential for better or worse.

In their video work *The Sky is Blue*, Maltese switches to sound, exploring the manual creation of everyday sound effects using props unrelated to the visuals they are trying to emulate, also known as Foley exercises. *The Sky is Blue* explores pattern recognition processes to suggest that our brains are not truly objective, as Maltese synchs one sound with two images. Maltese is interested in the plasticity of the brain, and how conflicts of perception have the power to change our methods of thinking, even in common everyday experiences. Her questioning of the relationship between what we see, and what is true, is increasingly resonant in a world

where anyone can search for the truth they desire. Maltese suggests that, in fact, nothing is completely knowable.

Van Maltese (b. 1988, Toronto, Ontario, Canada) works in painting and sculpture, referencing familiar patterns and shapes to pose questions about visual and cognitive perception. Specifically, through their research on pareidolia—the psychological phenomenon in which recognizable patterns are identified in unrelated contexts—and klecksography—the process of making images from inkblots—Maltese explores the psychoanalytic connections between pattern recognition and the subconscious. The flatness of their images is meant to challenge the desire for illusion associated with the history of painting, which she playfully acknowledges through the irregular frames she creates.

Maltese received her BFA from OCAD University in 2010. Maltese is the National Winner of the 2012 RBC Canadian Painting Competition and has exhibited their work in solo and group exhibitions across North America. Most recently, she has exhibited at Mickey Gallery, Chicago (2020); Night Gallery, Los Angeles (2019); The Power Plant, Toronto (2018); the National Gallery Library and Archives, Ottawa (2017); Carl Louie, London ON (2017); Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York (2016); Greenpoint Terminal Gallery, New York (2016); Art Museum of the University of Toronto, Toronto (2016); Cooper Cole, Toronto (2014); and Erin Stump Projects, Toronto (2012). Maltese’s monumental public artwork “subject to change” can be seen at RBC’s Waterpark Place in downtown Toronto. Maltese currently lives and works in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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