

Cynthia Daignault

*Vape Smoke*

21 February - 21 March 2020

The Sunday Painter is delighted to present an exhibition of new works by Cynthia Daignault entitled *Vape Smoke*, presenting eighteen quiet still life paintings. This is the second solo exhibition of Daignault's work at the gallery.

Cynthia Daignault's painting installations always centre on the experience of time. Here, she focuses that interest on the memento mori—the classical reflection on finality and the remembrance of death. In this exhibition, Daignault presents a series of still lifes depicting the traditional subjects of memento mori (skulls, candles, flowers, fruit), while also introducing more contemporary objects into the tradition (Amazon boxes, ice bags, vape smoke). The centrepiece of the show is a new multi-panel work entitled *Vanitas*. This serial still-life consists of thirteen paintings, each depicting a lone object at real-life scale. A vanitas, which comes from the word for emptiness, is a symbolic painting focusing on the transience of life. Traditionally, a vanitas depicts a group of objects, each forcing a reflection on mortality. Here, rather than present the group on one canvas, Daignault has deconstructed the form into its array, presenting a series of individual still lifes, expanding the notion of emptiness and imbuing each object with a haunting loneliness.

Around this work, she presents a number of other quiet contemporary still lifes. The effect of Daignault's serial presentation creates an indexical study of memento mori in present life, highlighting the poetic resonance of everyday objects. For instance, the painting *Vape Smoke*, from which the show takes its name, is a rumination on the futility of pleasure. Vape smoke—fleeting and transient—is as ephemeral and beautiful as it is dangerous and doomed, much like a human life. Each of these works speaks to our current moment—one in which the media and public consciousness focus on topics of impending doom. Daignault reminds us that so many of the objects around us have cursory lives. The water bottle and amazon box are as short-lived as the bubble and flame. Following the classical logic of memento mori—that transient items force a reflection on our mortality—Daignault posits that to live around so many disposable objects is to ruminate constantly on our own disposability, and that a mass fixation with death is a bi-product of a capitalist commodity culture.

Cynthia Daignault (b. 1978, Baltimore, MD) received a BA in Art and Art History from Stanford University. She has presented solo exhibitions and projects at many major museums and galleries, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, MASS MoCA, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and White Columns. Her work is in numerous public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Art the Blanton Museum of Art, and the Baltimore Museum of Art. Daignault is a regularly published author, and her writings have been published in a range of publications. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including a 2019 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, a 2016 Foundation for the Contemporary Arts Award, a 2011 Rema Hort Foundation Award, and a 2010 Macdowell Colony Fellowship. She lives and works in Baltimore, Maryland.