

# Shane Walsh

Shadow Arcade

November 1 - December 21, 2024



In a dialogue that has spanned over a decade, Shane Walsh utilizes visual leitmotifs from 80's and 90's subcultures to explore and expand the possibilities of abstract painting. Here, they act as a kind of visual mapping of the artists life where personal signifiers and subcultural iconography are deftly juggled, enough to retain a degree of the recognizable whilst at the same time avoiding the pitfalls of nostalgic clutter. Many paintings are of promiscuous constitution, where multiple time periods and traditions collide. Perfervid brushwork alongside tantalizingly polished graphic marks suggests action painting in slow motion, think Kline on ketamine (if Kline had watched MTV). Zine ephemera, graffiti, disco and the dim flicker of T.V motion graphics coalesce and oscillate between the familiar and the foreign, formally as paintings and within the mind's eye of the viewer.

As David Foster Wallace once said, "Irony is the song of a bird that has come to love its cage", and one could be quick to surmise that Shadow Arcade is an elaborate cage, but the presence of irony remains in absentia. Glaring subcultural references are somewhat of a trojan horse in works that retain more metamodern concerns, such as the earnest desire to reshape existing visual codes, and create an abstract language specific to the artist's life. In work now muddier and more ambiguous, the formal concerns of painting also sets precedent, most notably in the figure ground relationship.

*Shadow Arcade* retains Walsh's signature collaged aesthetic, a chimeric containing device for multiple histories and dialogues, polarities that are either never the twain, or beautiful amalgams. It is worth noting that in the act of collage the original material is often destroyed before being reformed, and works such as *Criminal's Apprentice* and *Chlorine Saint* seem to meditate on the destructive. They are the swan song of "greed is good", abandoned arcades or graffiti long painted over. Cartoonish, farty clouds are sprayed on or painted over with jarring lines that both disrupt and organize the picture plane. The softness of the aerosol is contradictory, a beautiful mark that retains a reductive, hooligan quality, often teetering between an ode to delinquency and vandalized abstraction. Other works however, are stripped of their bedfellows, *Soft Skeleton* and *Flashed Fangs* appear at first glance the presence of all that is absent with each collaged gesture residing in a vacuum. The eye searches wildly for the chaos, and it is within that search that these paintings embody a more Lacanian characteristic. i.e. it is the repression or denial of pleasure that becomes in of itself a source of *new pleasure*, and it is via these quieter works that Walsh begins to plumb the depths, and it is via experience of less is that ultimately allows for the experience of more.

— Holly Jarrett

*Shane Walsh lives and works in Milwaukee, WI. He received his MFA from the University of Washington in 2006, and his BFA from Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design in 2001. Solo exhibitions include The University of Wisconsin-Madison; OS Projects, Racine, WI; Artstart, Milwaukee, WI; The Alice Wilds, Milwaukee; Portrait Society Gallery, Milwaukee; Thelma Sadoff Center, Fond Du Lac, WI; and Blindfold Gallery, Seattle. Group exhibitions include the Museum of Wisconsin Art, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, WI; Juxtapoz Projects at Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ; Youngspace, New York, NY; Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, WI; Open Gallery, Portland, OR; Usable Space, Milwaukee; Transients Gallery, St. Louis, MO; and Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle. Walsh is a three-time Mary Nohl Suitcase Fund recipient, and has received press in New American Paintings, Art F City, Artsy, ArtMaze Magazine, Shepherd Express, and Journal Sentinel. Walsh recently completed a residency at Alfred University in Düsseldorf, Germany.*



Shane Walsh  
*Criminal's Apprentice*, 2023  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
80h x 72w in



Shane Walsh  
*Nicotine Canary*, 2024  
Oil and acrylic on canvas  
56h x 42w in