

POSTMASTERS

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SHAMUS CLISSET

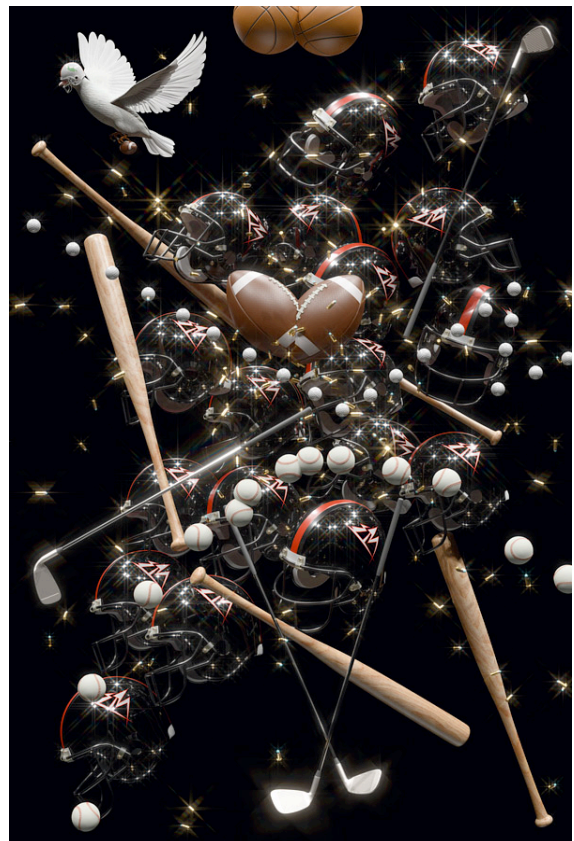
Space God/Magic Guy

Postmasters Gallery is pleased to announce our first exhibition with New York-based artist Shamus Clisset. The show will present a group of large-scale, 3D rendered images—an alternative reality of totems and tableaux. While generated through digital means, Clisset's characters and still lifes transform the familiar, analog world into glistening hyperreality, where high resolution reflects high intensity.

Paraphrasing the science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, magic is science we don't yet understand. With this dictum, Clarke suggests that what is imaginable but also inconceivable is most magical of all. Even when a hypothesis becomes reality, it retains its mysticism, its underlying principles beyond the grasp of nearly everyone but its originator.

Clarke's formulation of the scientific is found in the work of Shamus Clisset. Pairing 3D modeling software with ray tracing, Clisset constructs and documents landscapes, creatures, objects, and scenarios—an alternative reality—inhabited by his creations, including his alter-ego of sorts, Fake Shamus. This world is magical, in both its appearance and when considering the tools that enable its existence. We are confronted with a world that is both hyperrealistic and unrecognizable. There are familiar and unfamiliar forms; yet, what is most uncanny is the rendering and positioning of what we think we know best.

In the wake of misunderstanding, we use words and images we are familiar with to explain the inexplicable. (For example, how can physical referents continue to describe and depict digital entities?) Clisset's mystifying scenarios probe viewers to reconsider reality rather than accept it point-blank. Glistening surfaces of Lamborghini's and football helmets; floating knives, baseball bats, golf clubs, and metallic spheres; disintegrating forms frozen in motion — all of these suggest a world mediated by technology, controlled by commands and software, set into play by a power greater than itself. Surely, this is part of the fun for Clisset, and comes across in his tongue-in-cheek humor: irreverence in light of absurdity. Creating this alternative-reality is not about yielding power, because this reality exists autonomously. It is Clisset's inclination to use tools that are beyond ordinary comprehension to elucidate



the complexity of our lived and imagined environments.

Clisset's work, while seemingly similar to photography and digital art, is antithetical to these practices, both technologically and conceptually. Capturing 3D modeled objects through ray tracing entails simulating rays of light traveling through every pixel of the image, averaging the angles of the light source: a virtual equivalent of photography, recording space and objects according to refracted light. However, this is a virtual world, documented via virtual technologies. Printing these images using the most widely practiced contemporary photographic process, digital C-Type printing, Clisset underscores the perplexing contradictions that arise through his work.



Clisset is not a photographer, but this does not mean he is a digital artist either. Many digital artists employ aesthetics that are tied to a specific software or the (in)capabilities of a given program. Such instances are largely reliant on responses to commands and glitches, producing work that points to systematic flaws. Although glitch aesthetics are emblematic of contemporaneity and also reveal the underpinnings of a given (software) system, these efforts invariably communicate the same concept. Distinct from this methodology, Clisset uses software and technologies for their capabilities as tools, rather than merely pointing to their flaws, demonstrating that the output is only as strong as the input.

And then there is speed. With both photography and digitally-based practices, speed is implicit, if not imperative, in many processes. Speed is almost always associated with technology: new tools enable us to make faster, move faster, live faster. Again, Clisset's work stands apart from technologically-based modes of making, as there is so much information in one single image that it often takes weeks to render. Thus, Clisset could be considered an image-maker, alluding to a more painterly practice, while also borrowing from the vocabulary of sculpture as he models and arranges objects into carefully constructed compositions.

Because of technologies' utilitarian nature, its magical qualities are quick to fade. The most recent example that comes to mind is the internet. When texts on post-internet art emerged, many contemporary artists and writers delineated some break in internet-based practices following this logic: there was a time when things were exciting and the internet was a novelty; now it is expected and burdensome. Even if this were true, the internet simply being a fact of life doesn't mean we understand it, let alone use it to its full potential. And so, magic is actually all around us – it is "literally in the air," to quote Mark Leckey's recent discussion with Lauren Cornell. Referencing Erik Davis' *Technosis*, Leckey notes that "the more computed our environment becomes, the further back it returns us to our primitive past, boomerangs us right back to an animistic world view where everything has a spirit...So all the objects in the world become more responsive." And this "network of things...creates this enchanted landscape." Clisset virtually actualizes this sentiment, conjuring a world in which the incomprehensibility of our lived experience is made visible.

- Kerry Doran, New York, August 2014.

Postmasters Gallery
 located at 54 Franklin Street in Tribeca
 Tuesday through Saturday 11 – 6
 with Thursday hours extended to 8pm
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