ARTFORUM

CHRIS OH

SARGENT'S DAUGHTERS

Chris Oh, Palace, 2018, acrylic on coral, 9 x 6 x 5".

Like a novel with several intertwining plots, Chris Oh's exhibition "Interiors," organized by Fortnight Institute and presented at Sargent's Daughters, complicated our perceptions of space, time, and material through the appropriation of seven allegorical works by Dutch old masters. Oh deconstructed and reimagined the paintings as installations, reconfiguring the compositions and rendering different sections of a single work on multiple sculptural elements. Referencing works by Jan van Eyck, Hans Memling, Rogier van der Weyden, and Robert Campin, the artist chose unorthodox and difficult surfaces and materials, such as cardboard, coral, and a soccer ball (many of these items were found on walks), and pushed the original, canonical scenes beyond the traditional frame and into three-dimensional space.

The first works one encountered upon entering the gallery incorporated sections of a painting by a follower of Robert Campin, titled *Madonna and Child with Saints in the Enclosed Garden*, ca. 1440/60; these renditions included acrylic adaptations on a hubcap, a crumpled package with Homeland Security tape, a CD, and the plastic leg of an A-frame barricade. For another piece, *Palace* (all works 2018), made with a branch of coral, Oh adopted an anamorphosis similar to that of the time period he references: An image of the Virgin Mary was painted directly onto the coral, but the viewer could recognize its composite parts only when she stood directly beneath it. The objects in this first installation also contained specific, temporal references to modern technologies (although the CD is almost obsolete), and Oh blatantly engages the passage of time. In *Axis*, a wall clock is covered by a portion of Memling's *St. John Altarpiece*, ca. 1479, obscuring the majority of its face. Here, time seems to contain all of history, yet still it moves forward.

At the back of the gallery, Oh reconstructed Van der Weyden's *The Annunciation*, ca. 1440, in *Ecstasy*, an installation composed of six painted objects that each depict portions of the original image. The Virgin Mary appeared on a veil of metal mesh—delicate and eerily beautiful—draped over a stepladder to echo her triangular shape in Van der Weyden's painting. The angel Gabriel, rendered with a long scrap of metal, was bent into a protruding squiggle, the angles

mimicking the form of wings. A waist-high orange canister emulated the vertical bedpost draped in red fabric from the painting, and the bottom left corner of the white wall, the components seemed sparse, and some of the images overlapped—Gabriel's face, for example, appeared twice, also painted onto the eight metal bars arranged on the floor in a descending triangle.

For *Enthroned*, on the opposite wall, Oh's point of departure was Van Eyck's *Virgin and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele*, 1436. Fragments of Van Eyck's painting appeared on a vertically suspended piece of weathered cardboard, a hot-pink plastic crate uniformly punctured with holes, a bottle of honey placed on a white pillar, and a long piece of wood that read NATIONALGRID. Painted on the inside of the pink crate, the Virgin and the Child were the focal point of the installation, with the sides of the crate's structure creating a point perspective for the viewer standing directly across from the piece. Though they formed one cohesive image from a distance, the works acted independently at different angles. Oh hinted at the image behind his pieces, making the unseen almost palpable; and, whether the viewer was familiar with the source image or not, she felt compelled to fill in the missing parts. Throughout the exhibition, the artist transformed the value of his chosen materials, pointing out, in particular, the historical elevation of painting. With humor, inventiveness, and undeniable technical skill, Oh repurposed archetypal works of art to add beauty and import to everyday objects, troubling our notions of art's hierarchies and chronologies.

—*Alex Garner*