



## CHAMBLISS GIOBBI

*Renew-Re-Knew*

May 22nd - June 20th

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Arts + Leisure** is thrilled to announce *Renew-Re-Knew*, an exhibition of recent work by **Chambliss Giobbi**.

Does art carry a universal message? Yes and no. Some believe art always implies a kind of utopian prospect. For this reason, we need to shelter it away in museums, just as we need the police to protect our banks. Depending on where you go in the world, banks and museums may look eerily similar. Both are paid for by reluctant taxpayers, and the donations of the exceedingly rich. But suppose art isn't utopian at all. What if it promises nothing other than itself, a congeries of historical trends, formal techniques, and personal ambitions? Looked at in this way, art would still have a haunting reality all its own, whether it promised anything or not. The irrepressible reality of art, something which is neither aura nor value, would shine through with the hallucinating clarity of a dream.

Chambliss Giobbi's works are dreamcatchers. Less allusions than outright failures, his failures have an intrinsic, existential worth. Examining his artistry, one notes how he patiently recreates each canonical work from the standpoint of a viewer, even a diehard fan. He paints with melted Crayola crayons, painstakingly rebuilding his source materials from this most unmalleable of substances. And those who take the time to look at his works after the fact are transported to a place indifferent to hierarchies and values, where memory and desire intermingle.

Take, for instance, Giobbi's *Clipping*, which is modeled on a Stuart Davis's 1951 painting *Owh! in San Paõ*. While Giobbi's work is jazzy and frenetic, Giobbi's cover version feels almost like bricolage, an assemblage of elements which don't necessarily belong together. On one level, the difference between the two paintings is a matter of intentionality. Davis was working from memory to recreate a coffee pot he once painted as a still life. When he made *Owh! in San Paõ*, he was both remaking a painting and recalling an original perception. Giobbi, on the other hand, is making a painting that resembles another painting. Similar to how a portrait painter creates a double of his or her sitter, Giobbi has recreated his subject in the best possible light.

What comes out of this process is less appropriation (did John Singer Sargent appropriate *Madame X*?) than a study in art's irreducible uniqueness. At bottom, no artwork that Giobbi alludes to can be copied. Recreating them as he does, the viewer is confronted with aspects similar to those found in canonical works, but in a decontextualized way. There's also a constructed quality to Giobbi's results that would not be so apparent if he used more conventional materials, like oil or acrylic paints. Oftentimes, this laborious process underscores something in Giobbi's own work that the original only implied.



One such work, *Corpuscle*, is based on one of Chaïm Soutine's paintings titled *Carcass of Beef*. While Giobbi's ant-like carcass is rather humorous, the painting it's modeled on exudes melancholy and hunger. The palette of Soutine's famous painting is preserved; but its inspiration is wholly withdrawn from Giobbi's remake. Soutine would fast before making a carcass painting, using his hunger to sharpen his perception of the meat, masochistically thirsting after a corpse he had to freshen with blood after preserving it in formaldehyde. The narrative underlying Giobbi's painting about Soutine's work is more like a collocation of various stories. *Carcass of Beef* is probably something Giobbi has seen in books, online, and in museums. While Soutine's painting is about flesh, decomposition, and hunger, Giobbi's work is more about portability, the transposition of images through media, and the recreation of the experience of art. One could say that Giobbi has "hacked" Soutine's source code, creating something which borrows elements from Soutine's painting but uses these elements as a vehicle toward a totally different artistic statement.

Reconstructing paintings—as opposed to their original subject-matter or inspiration—Giobbi's works downplay originality while creating something which feels strangely familiar. That he has chosen these paintings to recreate (and, in effect, study) derives less from the application of any methodology or technique and more from the simple fact that these are works that he likes. Recasting them, recreating them in terms of different media, sizes, and shapes, only confirms that we're seeing a worn-over image of the first time. All of which is to say that Giobbi is a painter of contexts. Rather than fixating on the ostensible subject matter of the paintings he recreates, he recontextualizes his chosen themes in a way that highlights an archetypal presence: a voyeuristic specter, our own likeness, who peers out from behind the surface of canonical artworks.