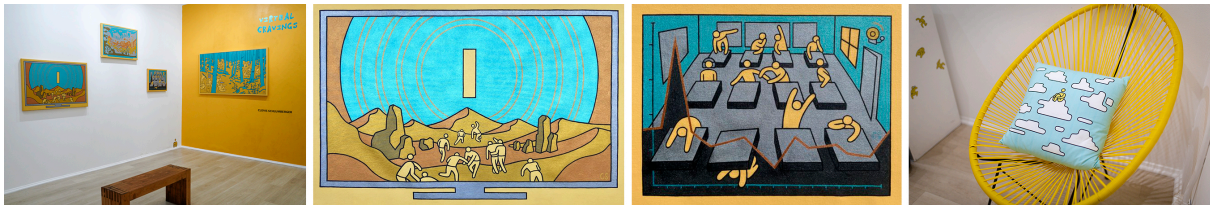


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Clovis Schlumberger: Paintings Imbued with Political and Social Commentary  
*Virtual Cravings*  
YiWei Gallery  
August 19 - September 17, 2023

by Jody Zellen



Keith Haring's iconic figures (on exhibit at The Broad May 27 – October 8, 2023) have permeated art and popular culture for almost forty years. While his canvases, stickers and buttons are filled with dancing, playful characters that radiate humor and joy, his works also were imbued with political and social commentary about issues that included racism and homophobia. Clovis Schlumberger's paintings on view at YiWei Gallery in an exhibition titled *Virtual Cravings* are filled with figures reminiscent of Haring's. Schlumberger's people populate imagined landscapes as well as cityscapes and interiors— his figures cavorting through these spaces individually, as well as in groups. This illustrative style also extends from his canvases to merchandise. Three of the gallery walls display his paintings, while the fourth serves as the backdrop for his various commodities: t-shirts, stickers, phone cases, socks and pillows displaying his yellow-hued genderless characters — a rounded version of the universal symbol for figures — in a range of poses.

Rather than install the canvases along a line, Schlumberger presents his works quasi-salon style, hanging them at different heights. He also paints a few of his figures directly on the wall as if they jumped out of the paintings. *Game* (all works 2023) is a canvas installed on a wall that matches the golden yellow color of the border and background of the work. Within the image, Schlumberger depicts a landscape filled with blue trees outlined in black against a blue sky. The trees emanate from a golden ground populated by three groups of lighter, gold-hued figures who appear to be at play. Toward the back of the composition is a lone dog that stares out into a distant blue expanse. Other animals include disparate butterflies that float through the flattened space. Although it is hard to discern exactly what “game” is being played, the atmosphere appears to be joyful.

While *45 inch model-Cling*, *Dismissed* and *Game* contain Schlumberger's idiosyncratic figures, other works including *37 Inch Model-Steep*, *38 Inch Model-Searching* and *Bloom* are people-less natural and urban landscapes created as outlined forms, filled with gradients and flat areas of color. *Bloom* for example, the smallest painting in the exhibition, is an image of a flower with a long green stem that bisects a rectangle that could be a screen or window. Scattered throughout the composition are white flower-petals that have fallen off the plant and litter the frame.

There is both humor and seriousness to Schlumberger's endeavors. His genderless figures stand for everyone and, while mischievous and cunning, they are also quite endearing. They are placed within simplified backgrounds both real or imagined that reference the digital world. Schlumberger makes images of screens, as well as the landscape, asking viewers to think about the impact of the virtual on everyday life.

<https://artnowla.com/2023/09/07/curtis-schlumberger-virtual-cravings/>