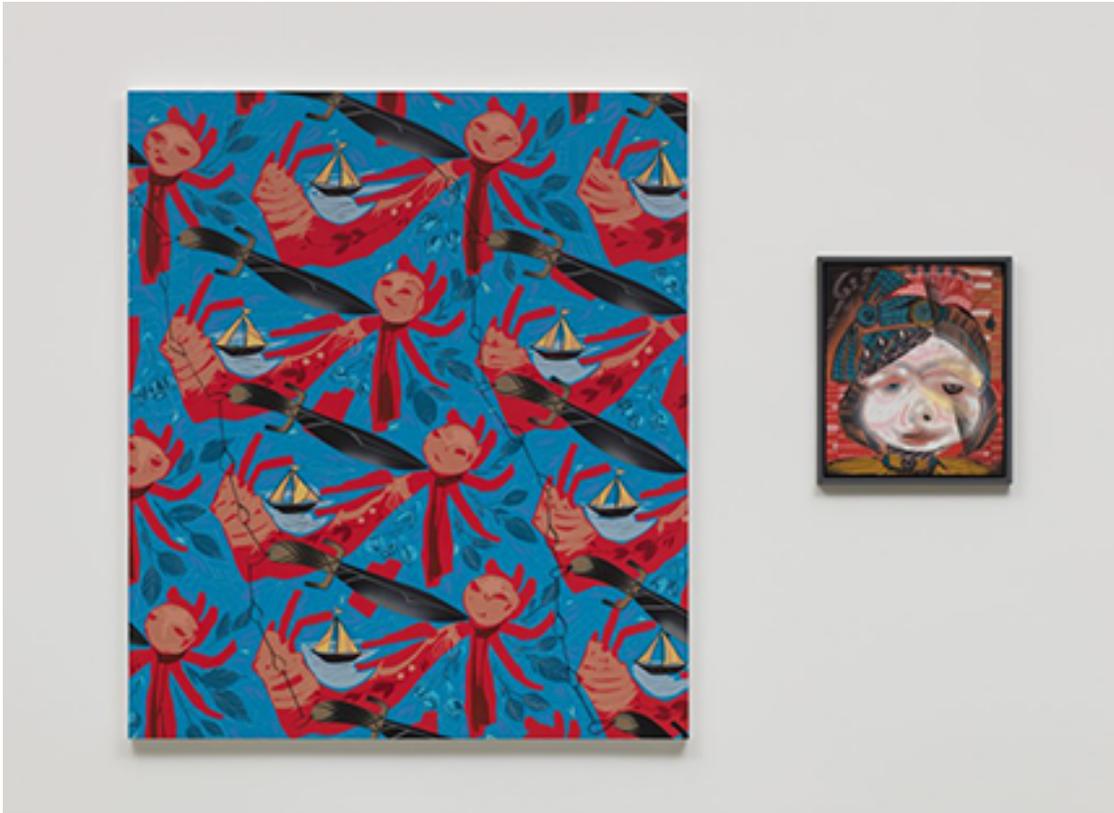


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Dialectical Relationships
Lari Pittman: 'Portraits of Textiles & Portraits of Humans'

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by Jody Zellen



Lari Pittman's works are a complex entanglement of abstract and representational elements carefully composed on the picture plane using a wide array of techniques: spray paint, stencil, black outline. Although his paintings are densely layered, Pittman does not build up his surfaces. The works are surprisingly flat.

Pittman often applies his paint as large shapes of color covered by delicate lines which, in turn, create intricate patterns. For each series, Pittman investigates different subject matter to create magnificently magical images that continue to surprise and delight. For ***Portraits of Textiles & Portraits of Humans***, Pittman based his paintings on specific types of fabric: brocade, taffeta, silk and toile. Each large-scale fabric painting is paired with a smaller portrait— images of unnamed people whose expression or mode of dress correspond with the larger works to create a conversation.

Portrait of a Textile (Taffeta) is paired with ***Portrait of a Human (Pathos, Ethos, Logos, Kairos #16)***, (all works 2018). In (*Taffeta*) horizontal bands of snakes slither across the composition. The snakes' black and grey bodies are covered with hand-drawn lines as well as blue and white diamond shaped scales. The snakes weave back and forth across the canvas on top of rectangular and diamond shapes decorated with intricate floral markings. Five sets of thin black-and-white lines cut across the image along the diagonal. Also included are renderings of green plants attached to long poles.

These disparate elements are collaged together in Pittman's densely layered painting. The accompanying portrait is painted with a similar palette to the textile work, and depicts an anonymous person from the neck up. The male figure wears a blue and green diamond patterned beanie (which relates it to the textile image), has one green eye and dangling earrings. His thin mustache and large ears make him appear both sinister and clown-like simultaneously.

Portrait of a Textile (Art-Deco Toile de Jouy) is paired with ***Portrait of a Human (Pathos, Ethos, Logos, Kairos #11)***. The dominant image in (*Art-Deco Toile de Jouy*) is a large golden key. The key is painted as a repeated pattern over a gridded background that intersperses a green and yellow archway and a black and white silhouetted plant growing in front of a mountain landscape. The similarly toned portrait depicts an elderly woman who has a bright green face with yellow and green eyes. Her dress is made up of geometric shapes, as well as a larger face.

Each of the twelve pairings juxtaposes an unconventional still life and a stylized portrait. The references to the titled textiles is obtuse as Pittman's paintings use the fabrics as a point of departure for personal iconography and references. The dominant image in (***Glazed Chintz***) is a dagger, in (***Brocade***) it is a tomahawk and in (***Cretonne***) it is a pair of clippers. It is curious that Pittman presents both weapons and objects associated with domesticity. In opposition to the textile paintings, each *Portrait of a Human* is numbered and subtitled (*Pathos, Ethos, Logos, Kairos*)— a reference to modes of rhetoric as put forth by **Aristotle**.

The pairings create a dialectical relationship that can be looked at both formally and conceptually. Pittman's works take time to comprehend. They bombard the viewer with *'more than meets the eye,'* asking to be excavated layer by layer. While a narrative is present, as Pittman always infuses his works with associations drawn from myriad sources, it is often subsumed by visual overload.

<https://artnowla.com/2018/10/04/lari-pittman-portraits-of-textiles-portraits-of-humans/>