

TWO COATS OF PAINT

Xingze Li and Sarah Pater: Extraordinarily Quotidian

April 26, 2024 12:33 pm



Xingze Li and Sarah Pater, installation view

Contributed by Michael Brennan / As a close follower of the emerging art core in South Brooklyn, I seldom miss an exhibition at **Yi Gallery**. Its shows are invariably interesting and novel, perfectly and poetically installed. The primary space is currently featuring a nicely integrated two-person show of Xingze Li and Sarah Pater's work, with individual exhibitions for each artist in the back.

Xingze Li's work occupies the softly lit intersection between the painting of **Vermeer** and the photography of **Uta Barth**. His pictures also possess a discrete, sculpted objecthood. Digitized images of shifting light and subtle color are mounted on floating aluminum panels – a winning combination of indoor atmospherics and crisp metal edges. The internal structure of Li's photographs has something in common with the seemingly ordinary, contemplative Eastern forms of painter **John McLaughlin**. This puts Li in interesting territory: he presents a kind of theology of light.

TWO COATS OF PAINT



Xingze Li, Untitled (4pm, late Jan., 3rd Ave.), 2024, dye sublimation on aluminum, 24 x 36 inches



John McLaughlin, #34-1964, oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches, Metropolitan Museum of Art

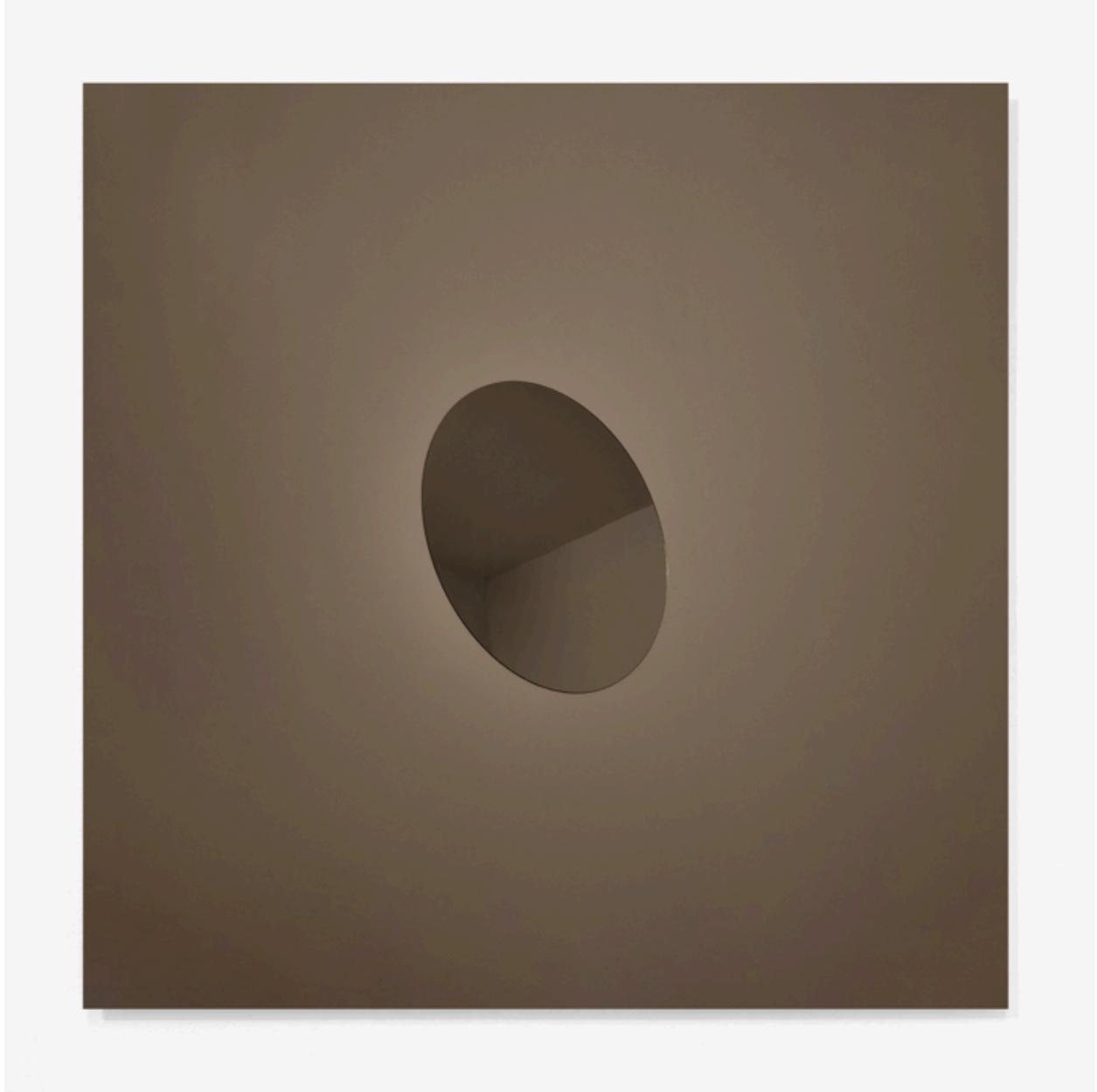
TWO COATS OF PAINT



Uta Barth, Untitled (aot #7) (from and of time), chromogenic print, 35 x 44 inches

Like Barth at times, Li tends to direct his lens inwardly, towards the most ordinary aspects of his own living space, such as empty walls or nondescript fixtures – the vacancies most people do not ponder.

TWO COATS OF PAINT



Xingze Li, Untitled (round mirror), 2024, dye sublimation on aluminum, 16 x 16 inches

TWO COATS OF PAINT

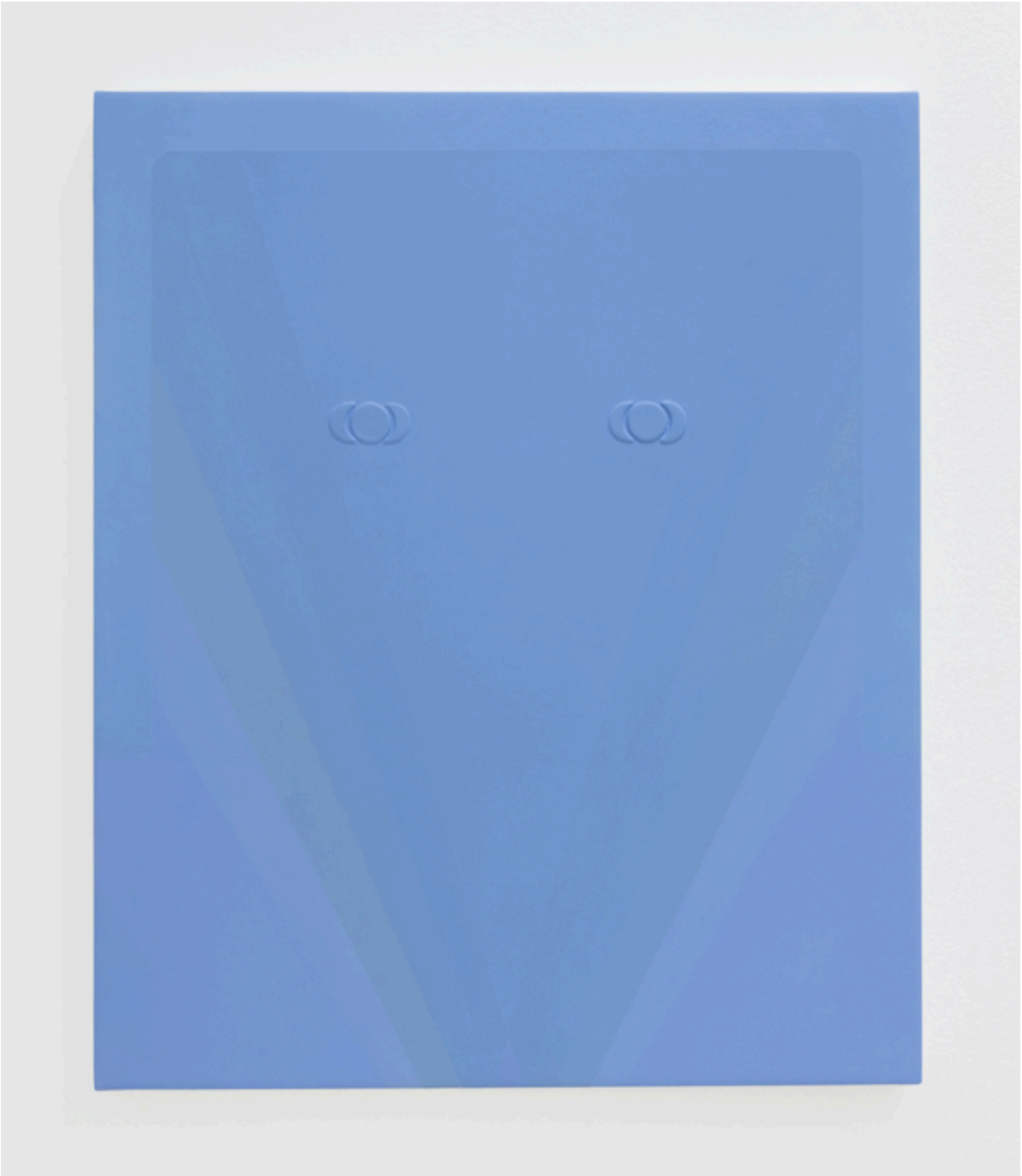


Sarah Pater, Two glasses of water (window view, relief), 2024, oil and wax on linen, 32 x 28 inches

Yet his images can also allude more mysteriously to outdoor phenomena. He makes deft use of ovals within squares and other images within ovals, centering them like the eyes of storms. This is his first time presenting images printed on elliptically shaped aluminum, and it works very well, morphing what could abstractly reference an outdoor weather event into something uncannily like an intimate cameo portrait.

TWO COATS OF PAINT

Pater too is comfortable straddling figuration and abstraction. Her two Mask paintings initially seem abstract, but, like Li's pieces, operate a bit like portraits.



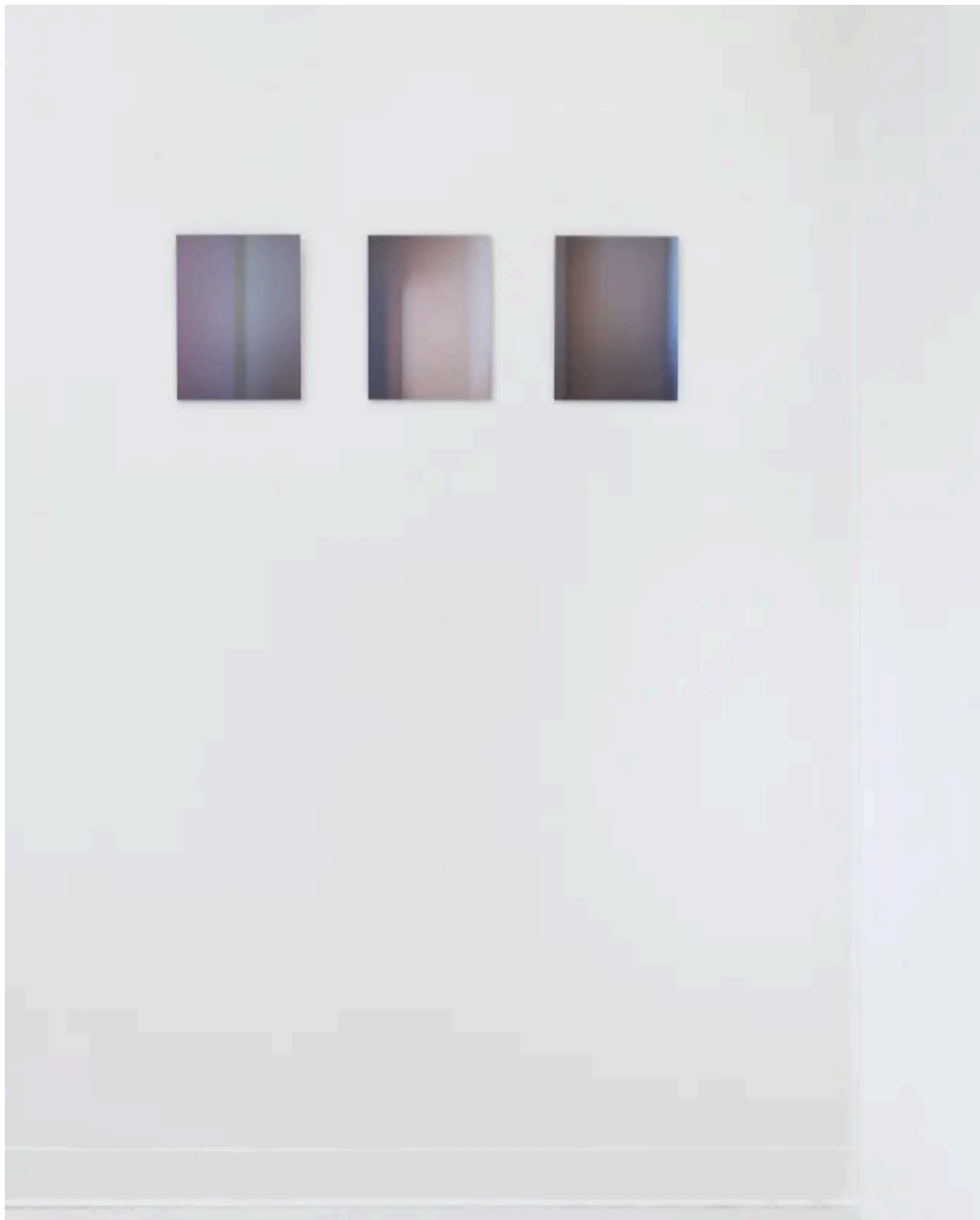
Sarah Pater, Mask (afternoon), 2024, oil and wax on linen, 24 x 20 inches

TWO COATS OF PAINT



Sarah Pater, Mask (night), 2024, oil and wax on linen, 24 x 20 inches

TWO COATS OF PAINT



Xingze Li, installation view

Her more overtly figurative work is historically informed and markedly precise, subtly encoding sixteenth-century Dutch still life painting in contemporary terms. Her still lives, I suspect, constitute a kind of

TWO COATS OF PAINT

self-portraiture, or perhaps a narrative of the quotidian. At the same time, she seems to favor an image that looks like an embossed circle chronicling the phases of the moon, which to my mind has universal appeal.

Li and Pater are very different artists, but they have overlapping concerns. For instance, in the immediate aftermath of the recent earthquake and solar eclipse, climatic references seem inescapable in both artists' work. Pater and Li share a penetrating gaze that makes the overlooked or ordinary, extraordinary.

“Here, Before and After Me: Xingze Li + Sarah Pater,” Yi Gallery, 254 36th Street, B634, Brooklyn, NY. Through May 11, 2024.

About the author: **Michael Brennan** is a Brooklyn based abstract painter who writes on art.

Tags: **Extraordinarily quotidian, Michael Brennan, Sarah Pater, Xingze Li, Yi Gallery**