

Morgan Presents



Mike Shultis: Rome

February 5—March 11, 2026

Opening February 5th, 6–8pm

537 W 27th Street, New York, NY 10001

Mike Shultis' new body of work employs historical compositions as an armature for societal critique. Utilizing a range of source imagery, from classical mosaics to baroque painting, Shultis draws a parallel between the hedonism, avarice and ultimate collapse of a storied Roman age and our own contemporary reality.

Recognizing his practice as situated within a lineage of American assemblage artists stretching from Robert Rauschenberg to Mike Kelley, Shultis extends Kelley's investigation of salvaged objects as imbued with memory: mixing these scavenged, pre-loved objects with the detritus of contemporary life. *Order now, delivered latest by 4pm tomorrow.*

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While the embarkation points of these works extend back to historical compositions, they are also rooted in the everyday. Shultis' *chiaroscuro* marks, derived from the rubbing of hot charcoal across the paintings, reference gestures by Caravaggio or Titian—and perhaps even the Great Fire of Rome—while in their juxtaposition to stuffed animals and garden furniture simultaneously seem to belong to a backyard American barbecue.

The injection of levity, and the co-mingling of high art with references to internet culture, is in pursuit of a societal truth. Shultis' slick, contradictory humor acts at once as an obscuring mask, alluring façade and a spotlight on imperial pursuits of power and conquest.

It is through these multiple, sometimes contradictory points of painting and assemblage that Shultis threads a line from Old Master paintings, through the contemporary refuse he gathers, to the political statement he arrives at. The exhibition's title itself plays on the digital trend of women asking men: "How often do you think about the Roman Empire?", a question that Shultis answers with another question, perhaps in jest or sincerity: "Should we be thinking about it more?"

Mike Shultis (b. 1987, Albuquerque, NM) lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. He received his MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale School of Art and holds a BFA in Painting from Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Shultis has had solo exhibitions at Morgan Presents, New York; Ashes/Ashes, New York; Diane Rosenstein, Los Angeles. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Library Street Collective, Detroit; Carl Kostyál, Stockholm; The Bronx Museum of the Arts; and Rizzuto Gallery, Palermo, Italy.

For press inquiries, please contact Lauren Lee at lauren@morgan-presents.com

Image: Mike Shultis, *Venus*, 2026, Oil, acrylic, aerosol, wood, vinyl flooring, fabric, ink, wig, costume crown, stuffed animal, plastic lobster, astroturf, plastic boulder, rocks, sand, toy elephant, fake flowers, fake plants, pillows, and plastic grapes on panel, 70 x 84 inches (178 x 213.5 cm) — Detail