

# Morgan Presents

April 20—April 23, 2023  
Dallas, TX

## Mike Shultis—Dallas Art Fair



This presentation mediates between Cowboy and Rococo paintings, investigating simultaneously the Romanticism & dark underside of both visual languages. Shultis proposes that these two cultural traditions, separated by time and geography, both support the elevation of the individual and an unabashed self-absorption via pomp, gendered expression and heroism—and perhaps in combination, serve as a warning for our times.

The Cowboy stands alone, squaring up against nature, facing danger head on. Shultis extends this visual language from its birth in Caspar David Friedrich's Romanticism, through Richard Prince's Marlboro men, into a critique of the elevation of machismo and a very particular American masculinity through its personification via the cowboy. The rich visual portrait, singular and perhaps alluring at a distance, is on closer inspection uncovered to be composed of discarded trinkets, worn out clothes and dated ideals.

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Shultis' Rococo works suggest a parallel between the opulent era of pre-Revolutionary France and contemporary American society—where expanding wealth inequality is once again masked by ever-growing consumption. By revisiting the playful and decadent compositions of François Boucher and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Shultis recasts these historical works as prescient precursors to systemic and revolutionary change, masked by playfulness, self-indulgence and adornment.

In dialogue, Shultis' use of medium unites these disparate visual traditions of Cowboy and Rococo; the works' form allow for an independent critique to run beneath each image. Through the utilization of found object collage, photo transfer and cartoon captioning in onomatopoeic phrases—BANG!—Shultis' works ask the individual to consider and then reconsider their contribution and engagement with a hedonistic, narcissistic and divisive body politic. Shultis demonstrates through his work that it is the minute decisions of the individual, the literal selection of each object and thrifted item, that constitutes the larger picture

—Morgan Aguiar-Lucander