

Charles Moffett

Jean-Pierre Villafañe

Playtime

June 21 through August 2, 2024

Opening reception June 21, 6 - 8PM

431 Washington Street, New York, NY 10013

Charles Moffett is pleased to present *Playtime*, Puerto Rican-born, New York-based artist Jean-Pierre Villafañe's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The exhibition comprises a new body of work, including oil paintings on linen, works on paper, and an architectural diorama, all of which Villafañe created during the esteemed Silver Art Projects residency that provides artists free studio space on the 28th floor of 4 World Trade Center. Ever the keen observer of his environment, Villafañe uses this insight into the Manhattan office to paint a narrative of the intricate dance between concealed individual desires and well-rehearsed corporate responsibility. Throughout this exhibition, Villafañe explores themes of power and illusion, fantasy and deviance, submission and irreverence, and sexuality and desire — all played out in an imagined yet eerily familiar “stage set” of the corporate office and performed by a troupe of traditional, white-collar workers.

Before pursuing his present visual arts practice, Villafañe extensively trained and studied as an architect at Columbia University and Savannah College of Art and Design. Influenced by this unique background in architecture as well as his skyscraper studio surroundings, Villafañe renders staid corporate environments — a floor of identical cubicles, never-ending corridors and elevator banks, a nearly-empty subway platform — in the compositional styling of the architectural section-cut. This visual device puts the audience in the position of the voyeur, surreptitiously prying in on the unfolding scenes of “work”. His omniscient perspective reveals not only the events unfolding behind the secure turnstiles of office towers, but the personalities underneath the suits, their yearnings and cravings masked behind a façade of conformity. While the figures arrive off the elevators seemingly prepared for a hard day's work, devious hints of misbehavior (too-high heels, too-short hemlines) quickly escalate from subtle curiosity to debaucherous chaos, unshrouding the elaborate role-play at hand.

Villafañe builds his compositions in layers of meticulous glazes of oil paint, creating imagined characters laden with make-up, oscillating between their starched uniforms and theatrical costumes rich in patterns. These shifts are rapid, altering not only from one painting to the next, but even within a single painting as figures' dress, limbs, and desires seem to transition seamlessly from a state of professional polish to one of abject lasciviousness. Staging his figures

in dynamic, intertwined geometric choreographies, Villafañe raises questions about the transient and fluid nature of identity. By revealing the ubiquity of the masks we all wear, the artist's newest works affirm the essential role that performance, combined with our susceptibility to illusion, plays in the sustainment of contemporary life. While Villafañe pulls back the curtain on this fundamental facet of our daily existence, he leaves one question provocatively unanswered — which role is the act and which is the real, blurring figures, personalities, and extremities just as he erases the line between work and playtime.

Jean-Pierre Villafañe (b. 1992, Puerto Rico; lives and works in New York, NY. MA Architecture, Columbia University, 2019. BFA Architecture, Savannah College of Art and Design, 2016.) Before pursuing a practice in visual art and painting, Villafañe studied and trained in architecture, including a year of studies in Hong Kong, where he focused on the implications of urban conditions for social mobilization. Since shifting to visual art, Villafañe's work has been exhibited in solo and group shows internationally, including *Diablo Rosso*, Panama City, PA (2023); *The Armory Fair* by EMBAJADA, New York, NY (2023); *Galerie Hussenot*, Paris, FR (2022); *The Yale School of Architecture*, New Haven, CT (2022); *Museo de Arte y Diseño*, San Jose, CR (2021); and *EMBAJADA*, San Juan, PR (2021); among others. In September 2023 he was awarded the TPC Art Finance Prize for the most exceptional and innovative presentation of *The Armory Fair*; and in summer 2023, the artist completed three large murals for the celebrated downtown Manhattan restaurant *Cecchi's*. In 2024, Villafañe was selected as a Silver Art Projects Artist in Residence.