

WIDEWALLS

Woodward Gallery Presents Margaret Morrison's Objects of Desire, Launching Its 30th Anniversary Year

Exhibition Reviews



Eli Anapur, December 15th, 2023

Displaying Chinese porcelain in European aristocratic estates during the 17th and 18th centuries was a symbol of good taste, wealth, and *curiosité*, a passion for possessing rare, curious, and unique things. The owners of these objects, which, with others of natural, aesthetic, and scientific interest, comprised *collections curieuses*, were showing to the world more than just their peculiar collections but were also 'displaying' their own erudition and discernment and, above anything else, their mastery of the world.

The paintings of **Margaret Morrison**, an American realist and surrealist artist, seem to touch upon these traditions. Filled to the edges with various objects, her images offer to viewers sumptuous displays, including crystal, silver, teapots, dolls, and other household items, creating a rich visual mapping of the excesses of our material reality.

Launching its 30th Anniversary year, Woodward Gallery started its winter season with the exhibition *Objects of Desire*, showcasing a selection of Morrison's oil paintings that explore the accidental beauty of ordinary things.



Left: Margaret Morrison - *Porcelain Sage*, 2022, oil on canvas / **Right:** Margaret Morrison - *Red 40*, 2017, oil on canvas

Objects of Desire

While in the past, people collected objects from faraway places as symbols of their power and erudition, the contemporary world is saturated with objects and things that oftentimes find their way to flea markets when discarded. The pompous displays of the past are substituted with the cramming of mass-produced commodities in transactional places, 'displaying' our inability to contain **the overabundance of material existence** and the transience of everything. The wealth of these items Margaret Morrison has found in Tuscany, her second home.

Tuscany and its antique markets of Arezzo, Cortona, and Lucca are great inspiration for the artist. She often visits them in search of the visual richness that her paintings later on record. Tables filled with sumptuous offerings of crystal, silver, collectibles, and other trinkets are transferred onto her canvases, becoming a rich labyrinth of forms and colours. As Morrison explains, their **accidental beauty** draws her to paint them in detail, of which her *Antiques* series premieres in *Objects of Desire*.



Left: Margaret Morrison - *Cristallo*, 2022, oil on canvas / **Right:** Margaret Morrison - *Reliquia*, 2020, oil on canvas

A Child's Point of View

Besides *Antiques*, *Objects of Desire* also features paintings from her two other series — *Playtime* and *Candy*. Believing that life becomes mysterious and magical if observed from a child's perspective, Morrison created the series drawing from her own memories and childhood experiences.

Playtime, previously presented at the Art in Embassy program, in Tel Aviv, Israel, and at the NYU Kimmel Vitrines in Manhattan, New York, is a joyous representation of larger-than-life marbles, while *Candy* features decadent sweet treats shown at the Imperial Centre Museum in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, before being premiered in New York City at Woodward Gallery. Blaming her father for her sweet tooth, Morrison finds visual references for *Candy* in shiny wrappers and the packaging of sweets her father would buy her on the way to the drive-in movie theatre.



Margaret Morrison - *Cat's Eyes*, 2011, oil on canvas

Margaret Morrison at Woodward Gallery

Morrison's work has been displayed worldwide in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including the Maria V. Howard Art Museum in Rocky Mount, North Carolina; the Shelburne Museum of Art in Shelburne, Vermont; the Rockefeller Museum and Art Center in New York; and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Atlanta, Georgia, among others.

The exhibition *Margaret Morrison: Objects of Desire* will be on view at [Woodward Gallery](#)'s 60 Pine Street NYC location **until February 2024**.

Featured image: Margaret Morrison, *Objects of Desire*, installation Image, Woodward Gallery, 2023