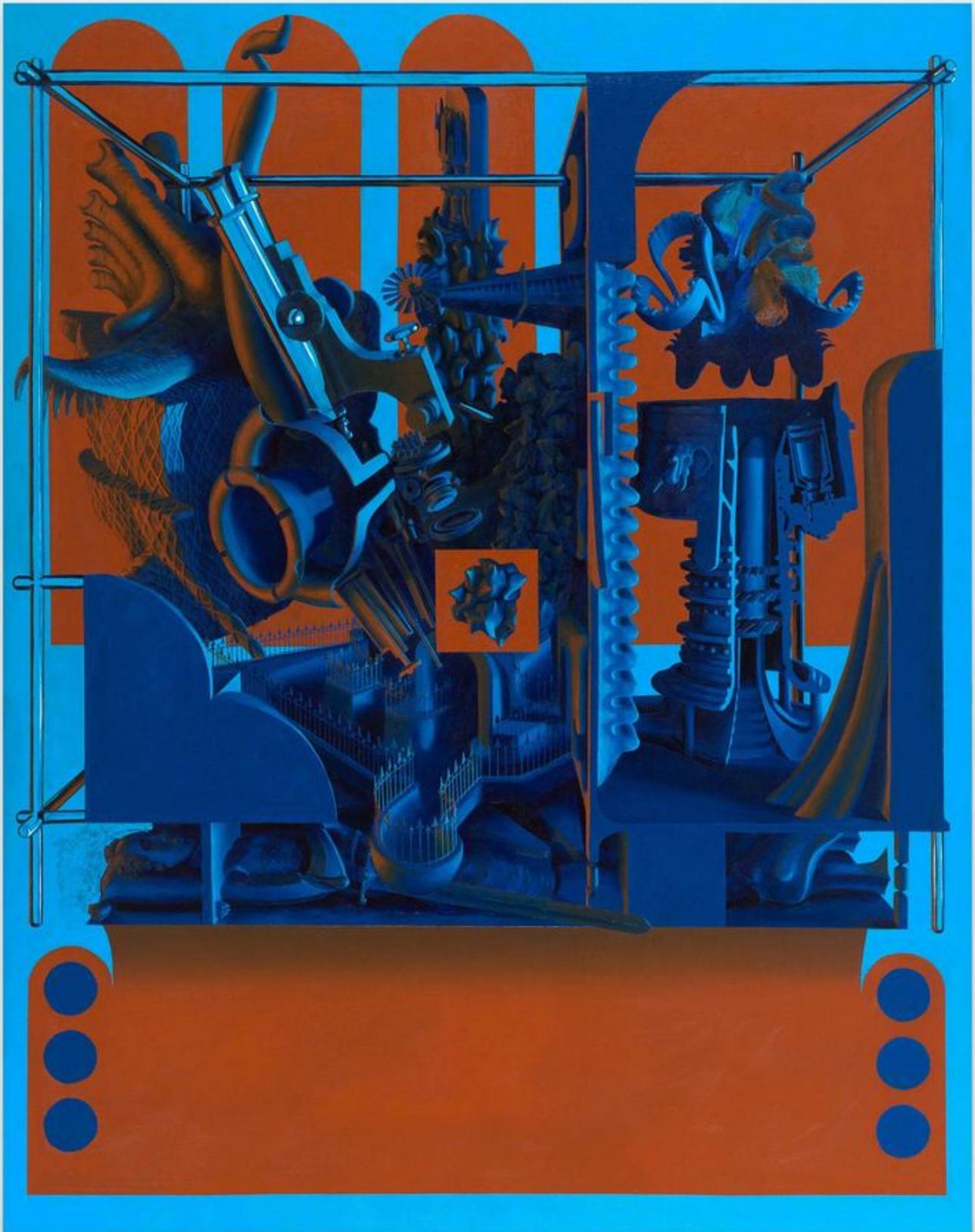


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Tom Waring, *Roba*, 2019, oil on linen, 71 × 63".

NEW YORK

Tom Waring

DOWNS & ROSS

96 Bowery 2nd floor

March 1–April 12, 2020

Currently occupying Downs & Ross are ten candy-colored oil paintings by the British-born artist Tom Waring. His first show with the gallery serves up endless facility and art-historical influences, from the Renaissance and proto-Surrealism to the beginnings of Op art and well beyond. The press release insists that this presentation isn't merely a game of I Spy by contextualizing it with two quotes. The first one is from a 2017 essay by the art historian Luciana Parisi that defines “post-truth politics,” while the other is taken out of Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, a collection of stories told by seven characters who have secluded themselves to avoid the Black Death that ravaged medieval Europe (a timely reference given the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19). One begins to sense that the lofty ambition of this work lies not in the self-evident skill of the artist, but in his quest to stuff over half a millennium's worth of history and countless schools of thought into a single picture.

This temporal compression translates to the shallow spaces of Waring's compositions. Planes recede with impossible distance into environs that appear as deep as, say, a shoebox. The atmosphere established in these paintings seems miniature, even claustrophobic, yet somehow the objects they contain feel monumental. Despite the fact that most of the canvases depict architecture (see the castle in *Eezlebulb Pip*, 2019, with its spaghetti moat and man-eating scallops, or the de Chirico-like archways of *Roba*, 2019), the jarring scale shifts prevent the viewers from orienting themselves with a sense of place. Instead, one could navigate Waring's constructions as apparatuses of the subconscious. Take *Fush*, 2020, where the artist provides numerous arrows to guide you through its complex arrangement—I couldn't resist the thought of taking a ball from the painting's bottom right corner and dropping it into the lovingly rendered banana-clad pachinko house, just to watch it fall into a fire-orange oblivion.

—Julia Ribeiro

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