

OLIVER CLEGG

Tongue-tied

8 April 2022-15 May 2022

MAMOTH

MAMOTH is delighted to announce a solo exhibition by British-born, Costa Rica-based artist Oliver Clegg (b. 1980, Guildford). Entitled *Tongue-tied*, the exhibition is a homecoming of sorts, the artist's first solo presentation in London since 2008, following several years living and showing in New York before relocating to Santa Teresa, Costa Rica. Clegg is among a generation of British artists who have helped to bring the medium of painting back into the spotlight, both nationally and on the international stage. In 2021 he was selected for inclusion in *The Anomie Review of Contemporary British Painting 2*, an anthology showcasing solo exhibitions by sixty of the leading British painters of today.

The exhibition *Tongue-tied* features new and recent paintings by Clegg relating to several ongoing bodies of work. These include

his iconic Happy Meal paintings, based on photographs of Happy Meal toys posted by sellers on eBay. In *Perro* (2018), for example, a goofy plastic dog sits on the floor, leaning its head forwards so that one of its hind legs can scratch its ear. It's like a moment from a cartoon moulded into three dimensions, rendered by the artist in two. In *A Profession of Hope* (2022), a plastic figurine of a farmer lies face down on a white table-top, his tools and his dog next to him. It is both amusing and strangely touching. Painting this discarded toy on a large scale, Clegg transforms something of little significance or value into a metonym of modern life, posing profound questions about what material culture, if not civilisation itself, has become.

Several paintings are from an ongoing body of work that appropriates paused frames from films and television shows. These

might include moments of drama or tension, such as a golden ring captured mid-air, poised to land on an expectant finger (*Vena del Amor*, 2022), surreal or disconcerting moments, such as a flat hand-painted mask of a mustachioed dark-haired man wearing a paper eye-mask over the mask (*There is kind of a hope in honest error*, 2018), or even calm, meditative and sincere instances, such as a candle burning in the dark (*Flicker #1*, 2020). Fascinated by visual languages and modalities, Clegg explores not only how image making and storytelling can elicit complex emotional responses, but what the relationships might be between painting and realism in the digital age.

Other interwoven themes permeating Clegg's practice include childhood and fatherhood. Intrigued by games, play and fun, a work such as *Falcarindiol doesn't change*

my opinion (2022), involves a drawing of a snowman by the artist's older daughter – Luna (aged seven), with a carrot balanced on the notebook page for a nose. It is one of a number of recent works recreating artworks by his children with an almost trompe-l'oeil touch. The painting *There is always a 'but' that spoils everything* (2021) depicts Luna wearing a Pinocchio mask at a flea market in Mexico. It is a joyous, uninhibited image, suggesting Luna shares the same playful, fun-loving and perhaps even mischievous sense of humour as her father.

Indeed, humour is integral to Clegg's oeuvre, sometimes entering into the terrain of abjection and the surreal. In *I Scream* (2022), Clegg paints a Mr Whippy-style ice cream with his own eyes embedded in it. It's characteristically weird and wonderful in equal measure. The onyx and silver gothic necklace in the shape of a cross displayed on a white plastic mannequin is a strangely haunting, virtuosic display of Clegg's painting prowess, a study in chiaroscuro and the semiotics of capitalism.

About the artist

Oliver Clegg (b. 1980, Guildford, UK) lives and works in Costa Rica. Recent solo exhibitions include *WE CAT*, at Journal Gallery, NYC, 2021; *Tennis Elbow* at Journal Gallery, New York, 2019; *Euclid's Porsche* at Rental Gallery, New York, 2018, curated by Adam Cohen; *Everything should be O.K.*, at Lawrie Shabibi Gallery, Dubai, 2018; and *Life is a gasssss* at Erin Cluley, Dallas, 2016. His work has featured in recent group exhibitions including *Exhibition 11* at PM/AM, London, 2021; *Good Pictures* at Deitch Projects, New York, 2020, curated by Austin Lee and Jeffrey Deitch; *More or Less* at Sadie Coles HQ, London, 2018, curated by Darren Bader; and *The Cruellest Month* at Mother Gallery, Beacon, New York, 2018. His work has been presented at the Prague, Busan and Venice biennales, and in museum shows at the Reykjavik Museum of Modern art, DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague, Saatchi Gallery, London, and Modern Museum, Hungary. His works have been acquired for the Maleki Collection, Faisal Tamer, the Zabłudowicz Collection, the David and Indré Roberts Collection, the Charles Riva Collection, CCA, Alex Katz Foundation, Susanne Van Hagen, Deutsche Bank, the Neidich Family Collection, Beth de Woody, Kaws (Brian Donnelly), Robert Downey Junior and Anne Hatheway among others.

About the writer

Matt Price is a publisher, editor, writer and curator based in London. He is the author of two volumes of *The Anomie Review of Contemporary British Painting* (2018 and 2021).