

Au Jus

PI: “Do you like Cole’s or Philippe’s better?”

JH: “I don’t know what these are!”

PI: “French Dip spots.”

JH: “Ohhh yeah. I’ve been to Philippe’s only.”

How the Show Came About

Juliana and I first met at the afterparty for my 2020 exhibition *Longevity Buns*. I immediately liked her, and we kept in touch, I think mostly because she had played lots of online poker, and at this time in my life I was in the beginning throes of my full-blown poker obsession. I’m also intrigued by people from Vermont. Over the next year I would see the art she posted on Instagram, and I was definitely curious. I remember she made this video piece with a found yoga VHS tape from the ’90s combined with footage of her driving around in her car. I really liked the piece, but the most interesting part of the whole thing was how she chose to document it as it played on an old TV/VCR. It’s like the documentation of the piece became a whole artwork unto itself.

In October of 2021, Juliana had a solo show in Los Angeles, which she happened to invite me to. It turns out that the space that the show was in was actually my very first studio in Los Angeles: a convenience store-turned-studio building in Highland Park. This was my first experience with Juliana’s art in person, and I have to say I loved it. The show consisted of images that Juliana had produced of these puppets from Vermont. Each of the images was framed in a handmade frame, without glass. This, in combination with the way the images were printed—on matte paper—gave the photo works a very tactile quality. It’s worth pointing out that I refer to these works specifically as images, and not photographs, even though these works were technically photographs.

Juliana and I share a kinship, in that we are both cat people, and that we also both consider image-making the central focus of what we do. I have repeatedly stated that my website (www.parker.sex), being my “master-work,” is the nucleus of my entire artistic implementation, and thus every work I’ve ever produced was made to be turned into an image to be stored and viewed there. ParkerIto.com (previously www.ParkerIto.com) is like a Tamagotchi; I have to keep feeding it images or it will die.

In my early 20s I worked in the print lab at my college, and it has made me the artist (man) I am today. For instance, I learned how to operate the printer model that now sits in my studio, and used to make the suite of paintings for this show. I always hated the photography students that used the print lab because they were so concerned with technical shit, and would interrupt me while I was gchatting one of my internet friends to complain about the computer monitors being properly calibrated, or voice concerns that their print was slightly more yellow than it should be. The images themselves, beyond any kind of technical merit, were completely boring, so to me it didn’t really matter how well the equipment in the print lab was functioning. The art was still really shitty regardless. And when I first started to write this press release, I mistakenly referred to Juliana as a photographer, and I’m really glad she corrected me.

Translating images into the gallery versus translating the gallery into images. The former being what had intrigued me about Juliana’s show, the latter being a key function of Post-Internet art. Post-Internet art took objects and found a way to alchemize them into jpegs, GIFs, and put them in virtual image spaces. My work has

always been heavily influenced by the Post-Internet sensibility, which is largely defined by this project. However, I also spend a lot of time thinking about how an artist can present images within a gallery context, and it was great to see Juliana successfully executing it in that first solo show of hers.

I saw Juliana's show, loved it, and then asked her if she wanted to do a project together. Over the year-and-a-half period that we worked on this show, the two of us had many phone conversations. I wish I would have recorded them because then I wouldn't have to write this press release to explain our ideas. But, basically, how I would describe the show is: it is a relational adventure between images and objects, consumed, digested, and shat back out by Juliana and myself for the gallery.

That's the theme of the show called *Au Jus* by Juliana Halpert and Parker Ito.

On Jules Olitski (Jewel Demikovski)

Naming key:

Jules1 = Juliana Halpert

Jules2 = Jules Olitski

Clement Greenberg once called Jules Olitski "the greatest painter alive." Jules2's abstract paintings were once explained to me as the epitome of Greenberg's painting-as-object / medium-specificity-in-painting thesis. Jules2 says stuff like: "Someone looks at an abstract painting, what does it mean? Well what does anything mean? ... You love someone, you go to bed with that person, you make love. Do you pause in the middle of it and say 'what does it mean?'" Jules2 said that in 1994, when he was 72, and the FDA didn't approve viagra until 1998, SO WHAT DOES IT MEAN JULES2???? (This is supposed to be a joke about the impotence of a certain kind of macho abstract painting, but Juliana said it wasn't super clear what I was trying to convey here.) Considering he's talking about abstract painting specifically, it's unclear whether, if Jules2 had made figurative paintings, he would have had some kind of idea what it means.

In my old Hollywood apartment I used to live with a Jules2 painting from the '90s, which was given to me and hung over my bed (there's a painting in *Au Jus* that depicts a scene in the living room of this apartment). I would describe Jules Olitski's painting style in the '90s as looking like proto-digital painting. During this period, he was making what he called "mitt paintings," laden with heavy layers of acrylic mixed with shimmering interference pigments, which he literally pushed around on the canvas with house painters' mitts. I can't tell if Jules2 was being a prescient modernist genius here or if he just stumbled onto something that looked good and went with it. Albert Oehlen, for example, with his "computer paintings," was clearly referencing the graphics softwares on his laptop, but the kinds of painting softwares that look like Jules Olitski mitt paintings wouldn't come out until almost two decades later. For me, it's kind of like I had to see digital painting in a 2009 computer program (RIP Paint FX) before I could understand an Olitski mitt painting, and this is actually the order in which those things happened. I even made some paintings in 2013 that look super similar to Jules2 Mitt paintings but I didn't even know who he was at the time. Coincidentally it turns out Jules1 had also made a whole series of works that looked like Jules2 paintings—well, because they were literally Jules2 paintings that Jules1 scanned from art catalogs. So for our two-person image pageant, Jules1 and I decided to install my bedroom (now in storage) Jules Olitski painting as a prop, a conduit, a part of the digestive tract for our ideas about images and objects to sieve through. I hope we can find out *what it means*.

I have been trying to make an image edit on the Jules Olitski Wikipedia page for some time now, but due to Wikipedia's image policies surrounding copyright, the image keeps getting removed.

My Art in the Show

I am presenting some old art and some new art. The older works, which have not been shown in LA before, I have explained before in previous texts.

They are:

A scanner sculpture with a cast bronze palm tree trunk

A still-life painting depicting my old living room in Hollywood.

A video piece that is actually a music video for my friend that I started in 2021 but never finished. I've actually never explained this piece in a text, but it doesn't really need explanation. You'll get it when you see it.

Notes on the new suite of paintings:

From Wikipedia:

“Giclée” is based on the French word *gicleur*, the French technical term for a jet or a nozzle, and the associated verb *gicler* (to squirt out). *Une giclée* (noun) means a spurt of some liquid. The French verb form *gicler* means to spray, spout, or squirt.

The suite of paintings consists of two dominant image modes—figurative paintings made with a “reverse painting” technique that I developed last year, and color-field abstractions made by layering photosensitive dyes on jute. I wasn't thinking about Olitski when I started making the abstractions but coincidentally they are basically the same method Olitski used to make his famous spray paintings.

Typical sufferers of irritable bowel syndrome experience the full spectrum of extreme shitting to no shitting, from diarrhea to constipation. I was trying to think of a helpful, visceral metaphor for thinking about this suite of paintings. If diarrhea is an abstract painting, then “healthy” bowel movements are figurative paintings. It doesn't matter the form—at the end of the day it's all just shit. I guess in this analogy constipation would then be conceptual art—the death of painting.

I like thinking of this suite of paintings as visually mimetic to the process of scanning something. The process is a type of data-set transference and redistribution in different formats. It's like the paintings are vibrating between spaces, back and forth, back and forth.

In my paintings, each of these image formats mentioned above serves as a base for other images to be overlaid. These overlaid images are on smaller pieces of paper that are attached to the canvases and covered in a gloss varnish. The subjects vary—paintings made by a child, printed images of bodies, various graphite drawings, printouts of Martin Johnson Heade's hummingbird paintings, images of hummingbirds I took from my balcony during Covid, photographs from the window of my studio, scanner art I made last year, and so on...

Jules2 said he wanted to make paintings like clouds. I guess I'm making some sort of painting approximation of a cloud as well, but not like a weather cloud like I think Olistiki was talking about. For me it's more like paintings of *the* cloud.

Imagine I'm a clown on a unicycle riding on a tightrope and I'm juggling 4 balls : image (famine), object (war), abstraction (death), figuration (pestilence).