

EDWYNN HOUK GALLERY

UPCOMING EXHIBITION

Ron Norsworthy

I, Narcissus



Ron Norsworthy, *Considering Narcissus*, 2024

November 14-December 21, 2024

Opening reception with the artist: November 14, 6-8PM

Edwynn Houk Gallery | 745 Fifth Avenue, 4th Floor

Edwynn Houk Gallery is pleased to present *I, Narcissus*, an exhibition of new work by Ron Norsworthy that will be the artist's first with the gallery after representation was announced in 2023.

Centered around Norsworthy's long standing interest in spatial poetics, narrative and allegory, these eleven works provide an extended reflection on both the personal experience and social construction of beauty, while also reconsidering narcissism as a virtue of self-love. Expressed through Norsworthy's distinctive process of creating digital collages and then translating them into three-dimensional form—what he calls paintings—the works oscillate between their photographic illusion and the transparency of their making.

Norsworthy uses the myth of Echo and Narcissus as a thematic point of departure for the exhibition, reinterpreting the myth's central narrative thread through a contemporary sensibility. Originating from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the story told of how Narcissus, after spurning Echo's love, was cursed to love in such a way that could never be reciprocated. After then seeing himself reflected in a pool of water and becoming infatuated with his own beauty, he was unable to remove himself from that spot, eventually dying long after his youth passed and with it the source of his original affection. Though often invoked today as a cautionary tale about the consequences of excessive self-regard and admiration, Norsworthy would have us reframe the story to produce an entirely new set of questions: What exactly is wrong with loving oneself? Who does society deem to be beautiful, and why? If beauty is a social construction, then what else might be as well?

These are questions that Norsworthy explores through both the literal and figurative construction of *I, Narcissus*' eleven works. Each begins as a digital collage composed of photographs mined and made from the internet's vast visual landscape and eventually transferred to wood panel, with certain areas or details being given several layers of nearly-overlapping relief. What illusion his images achieve is intentionally undermined, or undone altogether, by the visibility of the plywood relief. In a related way, the beauty of Norsworthy's subjects and the spaces they inhabit are typically at odds with the spatial incongruencies he leaves for us to notice. Through his use of physical layering and metaphoric reference, Norsworthy creates architectural inconsistencies that paradoxically compliment his subjects while being central to each work's presentation as well. The scenes he builds are often psychologically evocative while being narratively oblique: details may be richly specific, but their past and future importance remains permanently unclear, leaving us to impart meaning or significance.

Norsworthy reimagines Echo and Narcissus primarily through its central theme of reflection. With a different Narcissus appearing in each work, so too do the ideas of reflection and tone of contemplation change. In some, as in *Narcissus, Dearest*, the subject sits upright while turning away from us to gaze at his own mirrored image, of which we only see part of, leaving us to focus instead on the room and an open door beyond it leading off into the lush outdoors. In others, as in *Narcissus In Rollers*, the subject's face is all that we see, adorned as it is with rollers, a silk headscarf and sunglasses, and the reflection is captured by the glasses in a prismatic assortment of colors while we can imagine Narcissus considering his own beauty in a moment of repose. Absent from these scenes, however, is the tragic or consequential mythical element. Instead, the works take on an allegorical function and offer discrete commentaries on the multivalent experience of self-contemplation, of which beauty is but one part.

The figurative and interpretative depth in these works is typical of Norsworthy and his penchant for creating scenes that are personally inflected without being overly specific; images that suggest internal coherence and representational verisimilitude while also calling into question the very possibility of those qualities. Though these images may lure us into believing their illusion—into seeing and appreciating their beauty—they also ask us to consider how and why we might have done so in the first place.

Please contact [Veronica Houk](#) with inquiries.

About Ron Norsworthy

Ron Norsworthy is an interdisciplinary artist whose broad practice engages the fields of art, architecture, filmmaking and design. Informing his work is a foundational belief that the rooms, spaces and environments we inhabit and interact with speak volumes not only about who we are now, but also about our dreams, aspirations and our struggles as well. Through the creation of collaged reliefs, decorative objects, textiles and installations, his work carries the viewer through a non-linear, layered story of his life, one shaped by his lived experience as a queer person of the global majority.

Norsworthy was born in South Bend, Indiana and currently lives and works in Connecticut and New Jersey, respectively. His work has been exhibited at the Studio Museum of Harlem, NY; The Old Stone House, Brooklyn, NY; Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ; The Wassaic Project in Wassaic, NY; Five Points Gallery, Torrington, CT; Standard Space, Sharon, CT; Project for Empty Space, Newark, NJ; the International Quilt Museum, Lincoln, NE; the New York Historical Society, NYC; the Governor's Island Art Fair, Governors Island, NY; the Armory Show, NY; Paris Photo; and it is also in the permanent collection of the Newark Museum of Art. In 2023, Norsworthy was awarded a MacDowell Fellowship in Visual Arts.