

Curiel, Jonathan, "Wayne Thiebaud's Lonely Islands + 'Yadadamean'" *Sf Weekly*, October 26, 2020.

Wayne Thiebaud's Lonely Islands + 'Yadadamean'

Berggruen Gallery, CULT, and Glass Rice showcase local artists.



Reminiscent of Wayne Thiebaud, the work of Troy Chew offers up Bay Area-centric hip-hop puzzles. (Art: Troy Chew)

Tell Me When To Go

At first glance, Troy Chew's painting *Yay Area* looks like it was done with Wayne Thiebaud in mind. There's the layered cake on a circular dish and the ice cream plopped in distinctive glassware. Because the deserts are on a mirrored tabletop, the dishes' repeated circular reflections create distinctive patterns. But no. *Yay Area*, which also features a Coke bottle, is a kind of hip-hop riddle. The same goes for all of Chew's paintings on display at CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions.

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These riddles — and the game of deciphering them — are an underlying appeal of “Troy Chew: Yadadamean.”

Chew doesn't want to explain each work, so it's up to the viewer. Hip-hop music playing over the gallery's sound system (E-40 is prominent) helps to provide clues. Some of the references are easy, like the digital clock that announces “4:20” in Ask Berner. But the pickle? Also reference to marijuana.

In Yay Area, the spoon may be more related to the bottle of Coke than the ice-cream (as the etymological roots of “Yay Area” lie in “yayo”). By incorporating references to rap lyrics, slang words, and Bay Area culture (the exhibit's title is one way to say, “You know what I mean?”), and by painting in a flawless and moving style that winks at painting's most vaunted traditions, Chew is marrying disparate cultural scenes — not unlike Kehinde Wiley's portraits of rap artists that he did in a style reminiscent of historical paintings. These works aren't hyphenated art forms. They're evolved expressions of contemporary culture that stand on their own – even without a guidebook for the newly curious.

‘Troy Chew: Yadadamean’

Free, Through Dec. 5

CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions

1217 B Fell St., San Francisco

Appointment Only

cultexhibitions.com