ARTFORUM

Morgan Mandalay, *Still Life of Flowers and Red Curtains*, **2015**, oil paint and spray paint on canvas, 12 x 16".

CHICAGO

Todd Kelly and Morgan Mandalay

LVL3
1542 N Milwaukee, 3rd Floor
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Todd Kelly's and Morgan Mandalay's works reference paintings that are absent from their two-person exhibition—source material that is circumscribed and effaced rather than explicitly revealed by their respective moves. Kelly's *Still Life after Chardin*, 2015, and several others like it are derived from Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's 1763 canvas *Brioche*, a plucky little morsel that Kelly remixes into ebullient chartreuse and violet abstractions. The original's cordial bottle, stone fruits, floral stem, and titular pastry are here rendered in cartoon doodles and green checks that would all be so much rococo clip art but for the complex, sumptuous surfaces Kelly builds in oil over acrylic. The related *Theory of Gravity Still Life 13*, 2014, explodes the quaint aggregate of forms into allover painting derring-do.

Mandalay seems to reproduce sentimentality and to question notions of sincerity through his system for making paintings; each one here features a flower arrangement floating between crimson curtains (an installation version decorates one of the gallery's windows overlooking the heart of Chicago's Wicker Park). On the canvases, the curtains have been stenciled in, so that the draping in each painting closely imitates yet gradually shifts further from the first. A thick impasto iteration of their central motif was painted on a canvas not on view that was then stamped onto these, with impressions varying from seductively fat to ghostly pale.

Through aesthetic remove from his reference material, Kelly's paintings stress the limits of the still life genre's ability to accrue meaning among arrangements of objects. Relatedly, the crucial stage in Mandalay's paintings considers pressure and proximity in the space of tension between kissing canvases, recorded in subsequent traces of blossoms.

— *Matt Morris*