



Mark Mahosky, *Dogger Bank*, 2021, acrylic on board, 9 × 7½ in

Mark Mahosky: Vignettes and Souvenirs

September 14 – November 4, 2023

Opening reception: September 14, 6–8pm

September 23, 2pm: Mark Mahosky in conversation with Alex Baker

In *Vignettes and Souvenirs*, his sixth solo exhibition with Fleisher/Ollman, Mark Mahosky ruminates on the tumultuous period of 2019 to the present, a time marked by increased polarization and a swing to the extreme right in the US and abroad, a debilitating pandemic, and Russia's war in Ukraine. This zeitgeist serves as the backdrop and context for Mahosky's painting and sculpture, but as one engages with the works on view the current melds with the historic and the personal. Mahosky's polymathic interests shine forth in his approach to painting and choice of subject matter. His ongoing engagement with the history of abstraction is wholeheartedly on view from Divisionism (an early-modern painting technique of using tiny dabs of color to create optical effects) and Cubism to the military use of abstraction in camouflage, thanks to the contributions of modern artists in World War I and II (think the Vorticist battleship camouflage of the the World War I British "dazzle ships"). While an enthusiast of abstraction, Mahosky is never doctrinaire, freely blending abstraction and representation in the presented works.

Other ideas and influences informing the paintings on display include Russian avant-garde art before Stalin's crackdown on artistic expression in the 1930s; George Groz's prints of empty cityscapes complete with forlorn, leafless trees from his 1916–1920 period, their gloominess seemingly foretelling Germany's soon decline into Nazism (trees are an ongoing motif in Mahosky's work); crashed World War I biplanes alluding to the futility of war; American Manifest Destiny's impact on the environment and indigenous people as explored in a group of paintings of denuded forests; Mahosky's deep interest in antiquity, in this instance showcased in a work that conjures the murals of Pompeii; and flowers and plants from the artist's garden—respite from a world gone awry. Mahosky also makes references to recent events, but only obliquely. For example, a group of paintings depicting a coastline with fires in the distant horizon were originally conceived in reaction to the January 6th attack on the Capitol and the pandemic, but coincidentally found new resonance when Mahosky saw news photographs of the Russian bombardment of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol during the first months of the war in Ukraine in 2022. The images of that port city on fire looked eerily similar to the paintings he made a year or two before. Also featured in the exhibition are small sculptures that resemble military monuments, cenotaphs, and Russian post-Revolutionary pavilions dedicated

to honoring industry and workers like those erected in Gorky Park in the heady years before Stalin's Great Terror. The title *Vignettes and Souvenirs* reflects the small-scale nature of the works in the exhibition. The notion that vignettes are brief and evocative scenes that occur within a larger narrative resonates here, as does the concept of souvenir, which are often small objects commemorating a visit to a particular time and place easily tucked into a tourist's suitcase.

Mark Mahosky (b. 1964, lives and works Mifflinburg, PA) received his MFA from Stanford University (1988) and his BFA from Tyler School of Art (1986). In Summer 2015, Mahosky was a National Park Service Artist-in-Residence at the Gettysburg National Military Park. He has had solo exhibitions at Fine Arts Center, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI; I03 Exhibition Space, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA; Haas Gallery of Art, Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg, PA; Alysia Duckler Gallery, Portland, OR; Fleisher/Ollman, Philadelphia, PA; Joseph Rickards Gallery, New York; and Gimpel Weitzenhoffer Gallery, New York. Mahosky has been featured in group exhibitions at Fleisher/Ollman; the Ice Box, Philadelphia; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, PA; Open Space, Baltimore, MD; and Gettysburg College Art Gallery, Gettysburg, PA, among others. He is Professor of Painting at Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA.