

Press Release

Hammer Museum Acquires Clayton Schiff's *Sanctum*

Saturday, July 1, 2023



Harkawik is pleased to announce the acquisition of Clayton Schiff's *Sanctum* by the Hammer Museum at UCLA. Executed in 2023, *Sanctum* represents the union of two of Schiff's divergent interests—the psychological space of the domicile, and the dehumanizing aspects of the cityscape. Schiff uses pentimenti as a kind of “in-between” space to suggest both gestural action within the painting, as well as a path not taken by the artist (note moments of “erasure” around the body, windows, power lines). Looking closely, we see the figure is not only draped over a building, but borne of its confining bounds; its hand is defined by the shape of the window; its feet are carved out from the negative space of a power cable; it “holds” the building in a gentle embrace. *Sanctum*'s subject is edged in a curious halo, suggesting prior action (as in, the place where one's limb used to be), pentimenti, or the kinds of incidental stains that accumulate casually from the dutiful execution of rote tasks. Schiff's muted palette and sparse horizons support the dramatic irony of his visual punning, and his wooly brushwork confounds an impulse to inspect at close range. His canvases remain bare

at the edges, harkening to a panel illustration, and these vignettes, even when dense, are unfailingly straightforward, direct, and concise. They seem to exist in a place unencumbered by the trappings of a particular time or region, as if culled from the deep recesses of memory but pointedly lacking in situational texture. Despite their hangdog expressions and world-weary visages, Schiff's fantastical creatures are also subtle and light, and there is nearly always a sweetness evident in his brush.

Sanctum will join one of the most diverse and impactful public collections in the country, furthering the museum's conviction that "art not only has the power to transport us through aesthetic experience but can also provide significant insight into some of the most pressing cultural, political, and social questions of our time." Harkawik extends our heartfelt congratulations to Clayton and thanks to the team at the Hammer.