

Reniel Del Rosario

*The Store of Sturtevant's The Store of Claes Oldenburg*



December 1, 2023 through January 7, 2024

Opening Reception

Friday, December 1, from 6-8 pm

Artist Talk moderated by curator Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander  
December 2 from 4-5 pm at Coolidge Corner Theater

(Brookline, MA – October 23, 2023) On December 1, 2023, exactly 62 years from the day that Claes Oldenburg opened *The Store* at a storefront space on Manhattan's Lower East Side, Praise Shadows will open at our storefront gallery *The Store of Sturtevant's The Store of Claes Oldenburg* by Bay Area artist Reniel Del Rosario. The exhibition explores mimicry and 'bootlegging' through the appropriation of Elaine Sturtevant's artwork *The Store of Claes Oldenburg* (1967) and Oldenburg's *The Store* (1961).

An artist talk will be moderated by Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander, the Robert M. and Ruth L. Halperin Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and the Co-Director of the Asian American Art Initiative at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University. The talk will take place at 4 pm on December 2, 2023 at the Coolidge Corner Theater located across the street from the

gallery. This event is free, but has a limited capacity. To reserve tickets, please contact [galler@praiseshadows.com](mailto:galler@praiseshadows.com).

The exhibition, consisting of clay paintings, ceramics, and soft sculptures, began as an idea during Del Rosario's undergraduate career at UC Berkeley. He was introduced early on to the work of Elaine Sturtevant, who became an inspiration for him in his clay-based art practice. It was through Sturtevant that Del Rosario learned about Oldenburg's *The Store*, an iconic work in Pop Art history. Using plaster as his medium, Oldenburg mimicked consumer goods as mundane as cigarettes, undergarments and blueberry pie. Sturtevant's version also used plaster, whereas Del Rosario's presentation focuses on clay as the primary medium, along with some soft textile-based sculptures (which mimic original Oldenburg and Sturtevant soft sculptures).

According to Del Rosario:

After years of thinking that originality was the key to making anything 'good,' it amazed me that copying the already-existent did something that an original could not: critically play with its history and value. Sturtevant's project had copied as much of Oldenburg's as possible, from the medium, to the appropriated subjects, to the installation. It almost echoed a duplication; however, it did not. That was the most memorable part of her rendition—it was wrong many, many times. The colors were off, the sizes were wrong, key works or components were missing, works that were never part of Oldenburg's *The Store* were incorrectly added, and many works had abnormalities that the originals did not. Comparing them to the original Oldenburg's, I experienced moments with each work spotting the differences, drawing me in closer with each mistake, intentional or not. The appropriation was just the vehicle Sturtevant had used to make a point about privilege in the art world and who amongst her circle got recognition. It was that usage of the already existent to make a critique that made me acknowledge how appropriating, or 'bootlegging' as I like to refer to it, is less like duplicating and more akin to layering—adding a new cover, but still holding the original history, reference, and value underneath.

Imitations have been part of Del Rosario's life. He was born and raised in the Philippines where bootlegs of consumer products are abundant in the country's public markets. As a child raised in the Bay Area, he was exposed to bootlegs and knock-offs in the city's flea markets. Fraudulent goods persist in every corner of our consumerist society, from high fashion to everyday goods. These derivative, often poorly crafted copies, are perceived as symbols of unoriginality, poverty, and piracy. In a world full of riffs, borrowing, and theft, 'being first' is a virtuosic goal. In this work, Del Rosario ponders whether these goals of originality are in fact virtuosic or even realistically achievable in our media and image saturated world.

By copying a copy, Del Rosario's intention is not to simply prove that he can accurately mimic a work. Rather, he is interested in observing whether the original has changed in physical and/or perceptual ways through his imitations. Oldenburg's *The Store* and Sturtevant's *The Store of Claes Oldenburg* are decades old projects that have aged and changed in public perception. Their complete documentations are dispersed in private archives, often difficult to search and

pull as complete exhibition records as the works now live across multiple collections and institutions. Both bodies of work have transformed despite the artists never touching them again. Del Rosario's bootlegs comment on the fact that their original counterparts were made by well-established artists within a friendly circle of heavyweight artist friends and art dealers. His versions are not replacements for Sturtevant or Oldenburg's works—they are the contemporary alternatives for the criticisms they once presented.

### **About the artist**

Reniel Del Rosario (b. Iba, Philippines) is an artist that primarily uses ceramics, quantity, and satire to discuss themes of commodification and value. His projects range from interactive mimics of consumer establishments, reimaginings of artifacts, and imperfect copies of already-existing objects. He holds a BA in Art Practice from the University of California at Berkeley. He is a 2019 recipient of the Center for Craft's Windgate-Lamar fellowship, a 2022 SFMOMA Artists Soapbox Derby racer, and has been featured in ARTFORUM and Bon Appetit magazine. His work has been exhibited internationally through traditional and alternative venues such as West Coast Craft, Meta Open Arts, the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and on public sidewalks. He was previously featured in *Punchline* (2022), a Praise Shadows curated exhibition at Jane Lombard Gallery in New York.

### **About Praise Shadows Art Gallery**

Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a contemporary art program based in the Boston area with a focus on exceptional artists working in all artistic disciplines. Our worldview is informed by the notion that the artworld's untapped and unrecognized potential is worth cultivating, supporting, and championing. Since our founding in December 2020, the gallery has placed artworks by our artists in esteemed public collections, and our exhibitions have been covered widely in major international media outlets. Our work is grounded by partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in traditional and emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship — exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, and original concepts that no one has ever tried before. [www.praiseshadows.com](http://www.praiseshadows.com)

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Image:

Poster by Reniel Del Rosario for *The Store of Sturtevant's The Store of Claes Oldenburg* (2023).