

TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1950

The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week



JOHN ASHBERY, *Salle d'Attente*, 2016, collage on paper, 14 ½ x 18 ¾ inches

JOHN ASHBERY

The poet John Ashbery starts many of the collages in his new show at his longtime gallery, Tibor de Nagy, with a found postcard or a color reproduction of an old master painting like Andrea Mantegna's 1497 "Parnassus." Atop these politely cropped images, he affixes some small figure cut out of an incongruously different source, a comic strip like "Popeye" or a vintage Coca-Cola advertisement. He places this figure where it will reinforce rather than disrupt the original composition, so that even as he is shading, psychologizing or interpreting the painting he's chosen, he's also letting it shine as it is.

The pink-cheeked little boy in sailor pants in "The Pause That Refreshes," for example, activates the homoerotic potential of Mantegna's nearly naked Hermes — not to mention of the collage's title, an early Coca-Cola ad slogan — just by diffidently waving hello. The head of Bronzino's "Lucrezia Panciaticchi, set against a 19th-century train station waiting area in "Salle d'Attente," becomes a dramatic performance of the baroque monotony of passing time. And "Departure Mode," without obscuring the cloying tone of its vintage Valentine's card, brings out all the lonely adult tristesse waiting on the far side of any tryst by inserting a misty landscape by Caspar David Friedrich right in the middle.

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