

RON SIU

*“a little less conversation”* (working title)

Desire is shaped through mimesis; we long for that which others long. Conquest, jealousy, confrontation, and violence may ensue. Hence, desire has the potential to take on a venomous quality. Medusa’s enchanting gaze infallibly causes her admirers to turn into stone. In captivity, the praying mantis decapitates her partner as the romance is consumed. As suggested Roger Caillois in the essay *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*, certain moths will, in their attempt to flirt with their environment by convincingly taking the appearance of a twig or a leaf, fall prey to their own game and ingest members of their species.<sup>1</sup> Ron Siu’s sculptural painting, a chessboard, sets the stage for such a drama to unfold.

In a recent piece titled “Flirting”, Siu hinted at the mythological figure of Narcissus to address the theme of excessive, perilous desire. The horizontal position of

the painted surface, on which two wistful eyes were depicted, recalled a mesmerizing reflective pond. With *“a little less conversation”*, Siu revisits this vain opulence, through a highly ornamental piece of furniture adorned by a chessboard reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement. In nature, ornamentation is closely related to mating rituals; vivid colors and decorative appendages are coded signifiers that bear private messages only to be deciphered by the chosen one. Similarly, the game of chess relies on rules, coded visual languages, and strategic moves. As we metaphorically position ourselves on either side of the table, we lock eyes with our opponent, and enter the game.

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Caillois, “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia”, in *Minotaure*, 1935.