

AARON JOHNSON: NEW PAINTINGS

JUNE 7 - JULY 6, 2018

OPENING RECEPTION: Thursday, June 7, 6-8PM



A Cowboy and a Tomcat Walk into a Bar (detail), 2018
Acrylic on canvas
78 x 66 inches

Joshua Liner Gallery is pleased to present *New Paintings*, Aaron Johnson's second solo exhibition with the gallery. The opening reception will take place on Thursday, June 7, with the exhibition running through to July 6, 2018. The artist will be in attendance for the opening.

The art of Aaron Johnson exists as a world of dichotomies. Creating a universe of opposites, Johnson's imaginary world of the grotesque skillfully connects dreams with nightmares, light with darkness, and life with death. Concentrating his often irreverent ideological focus, Johnson continues to perfect new ways of making works, strengthening the unique universe his characters inhabit.

The exhibition is comprised of new paintings by Johnson that feature crowds of figures emerging from luminous spectrums of color. Each scene contains a multitude of characters, conveying an array of emotional and psychological states. Johnson asserts, "There is a mysterious quality in these crowd scenes, the narratives are not concrete, but the suggestion for narrative possibilities is ambiguous and open to the viewer. The crowd scenes can be ceremonies, gatherings, rituals." At times, the apparitions appear distracted amongst themselves, while in others, their stares directly implicate the viewer. For these new works, Johnson continues to pull inspiration from Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Berlin street scenes and James Ensor's parades, while adding the lyricism of Color Field painting. In *The Guests* a horde converges below an inverted blue triangular patch of sky, their colors dissolving as they meet at the center of the canvas.

As an artist, Johnson explores his themes with a renewed focus and a fresh technique. For these paintings, Johnson stains raw canvas with highly fluid acrylic paint to create intense pools of color and ethereal auras, recalling Color Field painters such as Morris Louis and Helen Frankenthaler. While this staining technique may be simple in terms of materiality and process in comparison to the artist's reverse-painted-acrylic-polymer peel paintings and sock paintings, this new method produces complex works, full of painterly movement and bursts of color unimaginable in his previous bodies of work.

Compositionally, each figure is painted in relation to one another, inverting the typical figure/ground relationship prevalent in the history of figurative painting. The result leads to a boundless sea of figures. The compositions that materialize spontaneously from Johnson's process, create luminous auras that he transforms into familiar archetypes such as the cowboy, the bowler-hatted gentleman, and the seductress in a colorful dress. Johnson states, "I like to imagine the canvas as a portal and this process as a kind of conjuring. I see the characters in these paintings as manifestations, brought to light via synergy between the fluidity of paint and my own subconscious self, and in moments tapping into a higher vibration or spiritual aspect of reality."

Aaron Johnson holds an MFA from Hunter College, 2005, and lives and works in Brooklyn. His work is in permanent collections at such institutions as The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, Colección Solo, Madrid, Spain; Fundación Mehr, and the Frederick R. Weisman Foundation, Beverly Hills, CA. His work has been included in museum exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, Peekskill, NY; The Knoxville Museum of Contemporary Art, Knoxville, TN; the Katzen Art Center at American University, Washington, D.C.; and MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA. He is the recipient of many awards, including The MacDowell Colony Fellowship, Peterborough, NH; The Corporation of Yaddo Residency, Saratoga Springs, NY; The Marie Walsh Sharpe Space Program, New York, NY; the VCCA Fellowship, Amherst, VA; and the CCA Andratx Residency, Mallorca, Spain. Johnson's work has been reviewed in numerous publications including The New York Times, The Huffington Post, The Village Voice, ArtNews, ArtForum, and Vice.



The Guests, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
96 x 84 inches

Contact: Please visit joshualinergallery.com, or contact Karyn Behnke at karyn@joshualinergallery.com

Gallery Hours:
Tuesday - Saturday
11–6 PM

Address
540 West 28th Street
New York, NY 10001

P (212) 244-7415
F (212) 244-7416

Email
info@joshualinergallery.com
