

# DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Lauren Halsey's first solo exhibition in New York to inaugurate its New York gallery located at 520 W. 20th Street in Chelsea. An opening reception will be held on May 6 from 6 until 8 PM.

Halsey imagines new possibilities for art, architecture, and community engagement. Combining found, fabricated, and handmade objects, her work maintains a sense of civic urgency and free-flowing imagination, addressing crucial issues confronting Black people, queer populations, and the working class. Critiques of gentrification and disenfranchisement are accompanied by real-world proposals as well as celebration of on-the-ground aesthetics. This exhibition will highlight Halsey's visionary, collaborative ethos, and will include new examples from several bodies of work. Among them are funkmound sculptures, including one with a functioning waterfall; twelve-foot-tall, hand-painted columns; wall-based sculptures composed using synthetic hair; wall-based reliefs on Hydro-Stone, gypsum, and foil supports; and sculptures constructed from stacked, painted boxes that evoke the signs and symbols of neighborhood life, as well as a new type of box sculpture that channels the vivid energy of a streetscape.

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*Text by Essence Harden*

In her first solo exhibition in New York at David Kordansky Gallery, Halsey tasks herself with matters of time. For Halsey, time is that element that belongs to funk, a modality that presumes land, place, home, sound, and ephemera to be traveling things. Time pressurizes and symbolizes, time instructs and erects, time—within funk—is an emancipatory organism, belonging only to get free.

Lauren Halsey features a series of architectural structures, geological manifestations, and vernaculars (hue, font, images) from South Central Los Angeles, her generational home. The exhibition continues her ever-growing lexicon of engravings, pillars, funkmounds, and

box sculptures. Declarations and blessings (“GOD BLESS US!!!” And “WE’LL HOOK YOU UP”) appear on neon ombre structures alongside businesses offering to save, adorn, and feed you. Signage from buildings now gone, and proclamations from those that still stand, stack alongside and atop each other forwarding Halsey’s sensibility that time itself is a matter of design wherein the past is not merely present but is structuring our HERE and our NOW.

In this presentation, Halsey has folded these box sculptures into her funkmounds—curved, cavernous, plaster structures—forging a scale model of South Central. This funkified architectural endeavor asks: How can existing buildings merge with a geological structure which offers substantive support, respite, and permanence? Halsey’s funkmounds protect that which is still here by erecting an earth-driven structure around it. Here, each fold and turn of the mound offers both shield and shelter, placing the people and things of South Central as that which must be protected. In the spirit of June Jordan’s radical architectural plan Sky Rise for Harlem, Halsey presents architecture as a tool by which to imagine Black futurity through a persistent stake in our presence. As Jordan pivoted the language of redevelopment towards harboring an expansive and visionary spatial landscape for Black Harlem in 1960, Halsey’s scale model uses funk as a modality that demands “transcendence from the mess of this world.”

The exhibition also includes a series of new hieroglyphic engravings, continuing the artist’s practice in monument making. Carved silhouettes of Black people, businesses, pyramids, and a spectrum of South Central glyphs mark the panels. Halsey’s investment in the grammars of Black life—social, economic, and spiritual—mark the vertical structures which are built to support it. As Douglas Kearney noted in the essay “On Lauren Halsey,” these panels signal not merely the building of a wall but also the “adorning of ones already up.” Halsey is ever mapping a Black geography, cementing and confirming that which is/has/will be there.

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Lauren Halsey has been commissioned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, to create a site-specific installation for the museum's Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden. Titled the eastside of south central los angeles hieroglyph prototype architecture (I), the installation will open in spring 2023. Halsey was awarded Seattle Art Museum's 2021 Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence Prize and was the subject of a solo exhibition at the museum in 2022. She has also presented solo exhibitions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2021); David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles (2020); Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2019); and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2018). Halsey participated in Made in L.A. 2018, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, where she was awarded the Mohn Award for artistic excellence. Her work is in the collections of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. In 2020, Halsey founded Summaeverythang Community Center and is currently in the process of developing a major public monument for construction in South Central Los Angeles. Her work will be the subject of a catalogue published by David Kordansky Gallery in 2022. Halsey lives and works in Los Angeles.