

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Old Wrld, an exhibition of new paintings by Jason Fox. The exhibition is on view in New York at 520 W. 20th Street from March 10 through April 22, 2023. An opening reception will be held from 6 to 8 PM on Thursday, March 9.

Since his paintings first appeared in New York galleries in the 1990s, Fox has consistently worked against the grain of prevailing stylistic modes and aesthetic pieties. The resulting works are not contrarian for the sake of being so but avail themselves of disparate painterly strategies to constellate pictures of life's inside-out, ever-surprising tendency to conflate the personal with the collective and the transcendent with the mundane. Here, in a group of recent paintings that exemplify his range, humor, and invigorating openness, Fox develops new motifs and revisits themes and characters in new, intensive ways.

Fox's recent "list" paintings, for example, find him incorporating informal text, doodle-like images, and improvisatory brushwork to create complex, intercut visual layers. Each inch of these large works is filled with unexpected turns and a richness of detail that unifies the varied nature of their content. Born equally from the artist's everyday life and his deep engagement with conundrums set out by modernist painters as disparate as Agnes Martin and Edvard Munch, the paintings ultimately tell broader stories about a world stuck perennially in transition—one in which old forms of knowledge crumble, yet new ones can never emerge.

The recognizable figures that show up in other paintings in the show—Bob Marley, Joni Mitchell—have a life of their own that goes beyond both their status as famous personalities and their function as containers for Fox's formal inventiveness. In Can You Hear Me (2022), the artist overlays Marley's visage with a skull wearing a porkpie hat, thereby paying homage to recent death-infused works by Jasper Johns and channeling their frank, invigorating attitude toward mortality. The being who stares through the skeleton's eyes seems to do so from a place in the immediate foreground—the place, in other words, where the viewer's eyes meet the painting and press it for information about its genesis, reasons for being, and aesthetic intentions. Disarmingly straightforward, Fox's images neither wholly conceal nor wholly reveal such

information, but rather demonstrate how familiar conditions often give rise to deeply unfamiliar experiences.

A painting of a bus stop, with its now-iconic Calvin Klein advertisement featuring Kate Moss and Mark Wahlberg, is another case in point. Fox renders the advertisement's photograph in washy liquid greys and rough pencil lines, lending it an organic informality. Though the naked legs extending out from the bus stop and ending in Santa Claus boots introduce a blatantly absurdist element, they also provide clues about the off-handed rigor that suffuses the picture with a Matissean sense of order in which color supplies both structure and emotional charge. The painting is a study in modulated textures and contrasting moods; its nervy compositional logic brings together interlocking shapes and perspectival dissonances, weaving depth from apparent flatness and repeatedly focusing attention on the movement of pigments across the support.

Throughout Old Wrld, Fox utilizes improvisatory approaches as well as more methodical ones. But even in works where the materiality of painting is on full display—as in a vibrant canvas whose radiant sunset threatens to visually obliterate the patterned geometry of a chain link fence, which otherwise defines the scene—an increasingly classical clarity of vision carries the day. If Fox's vision is trained on the contemporary world's penchant for fabricating ever more elaborate ways of bringing about its own doom, it is also attuned to the generative properties of imaginative freedom. He locates gems in the mixed ashes of once-dominant art historical movements and pop-cultural phenomena, relying upon his own interests and passions, however idiosyncratic, to guide him to subjects that subsequently take on new lives of their own. Faith and weariness meld into a pervasive curiosity that propels the artist, doggedly devoted to his project but somehow free of attachments, returning to existing motifs in some instances and authoring entirely new ones in others. Old Wrld represents a concentrated distillation of this curiosity. But it also shows Fox at his most expansive, looking beyond the precipice of painting—and of art—into voids that threaten to extinguish life and voids that supply life with meaning.

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Jason Fox has recently been the subject of solo exhibitions at CANADA (2021); David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles (2020); and Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels (2018). Recent group exhibitions include The Drawing Centre Show, Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2022); Artists for New York, Hauser & Wirth, New York (2020); Samaritans, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, New York (2019); and Animal Farm, Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, Connecticut (2017). His work is in the collection of the Hall Art Foundation, Reading, Vermont. Fox lives and works in Poughkeepsie, New York.