

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present No heaven, no how, a solo exhibition of sculptures, paintings, and works on paper by Jared Buckhiester, curated by Hilton Als. The exhibition is on view in Los Angeles at 5130 W. Edgewood Pl. from March 23 through April 27 with an opening reception on Friday, March 22 from 6:30 to 8 PM. An in-gallery conversation between Als and Buckhiester will take place at the gallery on Thursday, April 11 at 6 PM in Los Angeles. The following is a text written by Als about his first encounters with Buckhiester's work.

When was it? When did I first meet the unique and essential American artist, Jared Buckhiester? Doesn't matter, really. What does is his sui generis work, the incredible force of his invention as a sculptor, painter, draughtsman. A total artist, Jared sees the world—or more accurately the ongoing world—of his creation as an investigation into the power of making, and how art is the imagination made manifest.

I think I first saw Jared's work—his sculptures—sometime after we'd met; he was showing them in a small gallery in Brooklyn. I recall that the sculptures were of kneeling figures whose mouths or bottoms—I don't remember which—were receptacles. I remember the sculptures were terra cotta or gave the impression of being terra cotta, the color of that beautiful earthenware. And I remember, too, that a number of the figures sported hats that, at the time, made me think of nineteenth-century Prussian army officer gear—vertical head covering that spoke of war or just design, a perverse top hat.

The point is, I had never seen anything like Jared's work before; all of it—the shapes, the colors, the gestalt—made for a thrilling viewing experience, one that seemed to spring, full blown, from a distinctly queer mind that knew itself, inside and out. Looking at Jared's installation that evening, I wanted to know more; his vocabulary was so new and decidedly different from what I had grown up on.

I started looking at art in New York's museums and galleries when I was a teenager, in the mid nineteen-seventies. During that era, sculptors such as Richard Serra and Donald

Judd were very much still talked about. And what one admired about those, and other artists, was their commitment to the “thingness” of their enterprise, and how a sculptural work could transform, or work in harmony with, public space. And while I admired some of that work—its quietness and largeness inspired not awe in me, but reflection—I was much more drawn to the protean imagination and strengths of Texas-born Robert Rauschenberg, whose various creations I first saw when his retrospective took MoMA by storm in 1977. I was sixteen years old when the show opened. I had never seen anything like it before. A bedspread splattered with paint, a goat splattered with paint—with a tire around its middle—and cardboard boxes that had been flattened into interesting shapes. Those are just some of the objects I saw at the Rauschenberg show; I didn't understand any of it at first, but I loved every bit of it because Rauschenberg wasn't presenting his work as a “plain” fact like Serra and the rest; rather, Rauschenberg's energy was geared toward expressing what minimalism and other movements of the period denied: the joy of the imagination as it fills space, rolling on and on.

Back then, I didn't know Rauschenberg was a queen, but I could tell from his work—the coded messages writ large or small throughout the show—that something was going on, and it was comforting to know that such an important artist was letting me try to figure stuff out at my own pace, was allowing my sissy soul to feel.

I felt the same way when I first saw Jared's work—that the artist was giving me permission to feel and think in ways that didn't encourage a simplistic response because that would mess with not only the artist's complications, but yours, too. As I've said, the first pieces I saw by Jared were sculptures. Since then, I've seen a number of his other pieces, of course, and I loved coming up against their singularity. Truth to tell, I don't believe I've seen anything like his sculptures before in American art, and with such pretty, little booted feet, too. Torsos, heads that are somewhere between a horse's and a human's—or a combination of both—threw me off at first, even as they delighted and mystified me. How can the top half of his sculptures not topple over? Isn't that dreamlike figure on top—in addition to being like something you may have only seen in a dream

before—too much for the base (or your mind)? But then you look at Jared’s various sculptures’ bottom half, their base, with their solid little legs—sometimes—wrapped around or growing out of it, and you know how it works even if you don’t. The point is, Jared knows how to put these various elements together with such elegance and authority that he frees us from worry and there they go, his sometimes cowboy-hatted figures entering the wild west space of your mind.

Jared loves movies. Sometimes they are cheap looking but have an emotional resonance for him that's worth arguing about. His taste doesn't really run to camp—to being distant from the spectacle—he's an engaged critic with a particular interest in how the surface of things are a valid and true thing and can speak from the heart: surfaces can make us feel. Jared's paintings and drawings, so finely rendered, can feel like stills grabbed from a gothic American movie home, one where the Formica countertop shines, but the floorboards creek and the tree just outside the window is crooked.

Like Rauschenberg, Jared is a southerner; he was born and raised in Dahlonega, Georgia, in 1977, in the north Georgia mountains, where the Appalachian Trail begins. From the age of ten or so, he started drawing and taking art classes. In 1995, when he was eighteen, he moved to New York to study at Pratt; a year after landing in New York, he began to focus on fashion photography. 2004 marks Jared’s return to drawing in earnest; three years later, he began to work with ceramics. In 2010 the young artist enrolled at Bard, where he was awarded his master’s in fine arts in 2012.

Nothing is lost when it comes to making art. Jared’s (the draughtsman) interest in style—in how garments can sometime define the male body; masculinity as a kind of uniform—is no doubt informed by his work in fashion, where a great deal of time is spent on a garment's line. But fashion celebrates the sleight of hand, the temporary. Jared's beautiful, lyrical hand is permanent, and filled with the history of art created during his time, and beyond. His creations make manifest what we could never imagine ourselves, and how grateful are we for that?

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Jared Buckhiester (b. 1977, Dahlonega, Georgia) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at venues including Dunes, Portland, Maine (2023); Lighthouse Works, Fishers Island, New York (2021); Clough-Hanson Gallery, Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee (2018). His work has been included in notable group exhibitions including elbow fist to make, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); Toni Morrison's Black Book, curated by Hilton Als, David Zwirner, New York (2022); and One Day at a Time: Manny Farber and Termite Art, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2018). His work is in the collection of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York. He received his BFA from Pratt Institute in New York and his MFA from Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson in New York. Buckhiester lives and works in New York.