

DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY

캘빈 마커스
프리즈 서울 2022

CALVIN MARCUS
FRIEZE SEOUL 2022

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Calvin Marcus
Frieze Seoul 2022

*** Text By Samara Davis*

If you follow Calvin Marcus's work, you know how adept he is at creating all-encompassing worlds through his paintings. Each new series is a thorough dive into a different, highly idiosyncratic realm laced with humor, enchantment, and grotesquerie. His visions are vibrant, confident, and mind-bending. They are both dispatches from Marcus's brain and invitations into his world.

This new group of paintings is a slight departure from the Marcus hits I know. Derived from the background of other paintings he has made, these seven square pieces zero in on the weeds and tiny leaves that have appeared in so many of his other works. Here, they pull focus in obsessive detail, depicting an aspect of nature that is often taken for granted. The weeds—a relentless emergence of green—thrive despite their bleak context. Patches of muddy nothingness are the new backdrop. A background of a background is unremarkable, yet foreboding.

Intricate and bright, the plants in these works are very much alive, but eerily so. Though the paintings are exhaustive, Marcus is clearly not trying to recreate nature. Using repetition, motifs, and texture, he sticks to a vernacular and methodically creates the subject matter. But the emptiness of this matter seems to haunt the feverish detail, which appears almost devotional.

What makes the images so ghostly, so menacing? Is there a threat of losing oneself in an overgrown world, where the details overwhelm exactly as their meaning fades? These odes to endless embellishment offer no real place to land. Countless dots of radioactive green float in herds and huddles against a cold, loose, deep brown wash. It's a contrast that leaves one unmoored.

As with many of Marcus's pieces, perhaps part of their magnetism is that they appear deceptively knowable at first—whether because of their subject matter, the scene, or the absurdity that's offered—but with even the slightest amount of engagement, the meaning often grows until the ambiguity itself seems monstrous.

Marcus has a knack for revealing the dark underbelly of an object. An intense magnification gives way to a real or imagined terror or a lurking humor. But here there seems to be less of a revelation than a reverie. A reverence? The enchantment remains, but it has shed its former twinning with the grotesque, which animates many of Marcus's other works. Is this enchantment an invitation to pause and consider the devotion to craft? Or is this magic merely the intense repetition of small gestures, which happens to make one devoted?

Marcus takes on each series of paintings as a totally new psychological and material investigation, and for this reason, every project represents a significant step in his career. By this account, what is happening here seems especially noteworthy. The spirit of these stunning, yet melancholic, paintings might be just beyond Marcus's control, and the motivations that drove him to confront the existential voids lurking behind them might elude his—and our—awareness. For once, we may be on the outside of one of his worlds, witnessing the entanglement between an artist and his work, as well as the spontaneous emergence of a new kind of formal and material composition.

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

While the work of Calvin Marcus (b. 1988, San Francisco) is not concerned in any overt way with his own biography, he is interested in artistic persona as it takes shape through carefully directed formal decisions and conceptual structures. The mixed-media paintings, sculptures, and drawings that result are notable for their iconic forms (dead soldiers, stylized self-portraits with devilish tongues, ceramic fish), meticulous attention to craft, and surreal humor, evincing a playfulness born from variance among serial forms. Marcus draws attention to the pillars that support artistic endeavor as a whole, as well as the basic questions that often go unanswered when any artist chooses to display their output in a public setting. This has led him to produce works that also address the physical and institutional envelopes in which art is experienced.

Calvin Marcus has been the subject of solo exhibitions at K11 Musea, Hong Kong (2019); The Power Station, Dallas (2017); Peep-Hole, Milan (2015); and Public Fiction, Los Angeles (2014). Recent group exhibitions include New Works in the Collection – From Abramovic to Warhol, Louisiana Museum of Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Just Connect, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2020); Whitney Biennial 2019, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Trick Brain, Aïshti Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon (2017); and High Anxiety: New Acquisitions, Rubell Museum, Miami (2016), among others. His work is in the permanent collections of the Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Marcus lives and works in Los Angeles.

캘빈 마커스 (Calvin Marcus)
프리즈 서울 2022

** 글쓴이: 사마라 데이비스 (Samara Davis)

캘빈 마커스의 작업을 관심 깊게 지켜봐 왔다면 그가 회화로 포착하는 다양한 세계들에 대해 잘 알 것이다. 시리즈마다 작가는 유머러스하고, 매혹적이며, 때로는 그로테스크한 그만의 독특한 세계관들에 몰두하는데 그의 활기차고 생기가 넘치며 허를 찌르는 회화는 마커스의 상상 속에서 그집어낸 장면이자 그의 세계관으로의 초대이기도 하다.

이번 새로운 연작 속 회화 작품들은 기존에 잘 알려진 마커스의 작업과는 궤를 살짝 달리한다. 일곱 개의 정사각형 신작 회화 작업에서는 그의 예전 작품 속 배경으로 쓰인 잡초와 작은 잎사귀들을 볼 수 있는데, 여기서 우리는 자연스럽다 못해 지루하다고 생각할 수 있는 자연의 일부분을 강박적으로 묘사하는 작가를 볼 수 있다. 황량하게 배경으로써 존재하는 잡초는 그 심심한 문맥이 무색하게 끈질기게 자라며 비로소 작품의 주제가 되고 그 뒤 공허한 흙탕물은 배경 뒤 존재하는 새로운 배경이 된다. 이렇게 만들어진 배경은 맛잇하면서도 웬지 모를 불길함이 느껴진다.

밝은 색채로 밀도감 있게 묘사된 그림 속 식물들은 싱그러우면서도 으스스하게 존재한다. 무성한 잡초를 한줄 한줄 그리는 마커스의 꼼꼼한 묘사는 자연의 단순한 재현을 넘어 언어적으로 느껴지는데 반복과 모티프, 질감 등 다양한 조형 요소들을 마치 문법과 같이 방법적으로 활용함에서 이를 볼 수 있다. 공허한 주제를 디테일하게 그린 마커스의 작품을 보고 있자면 작가의 헌신이 느껴지기까지 한다.

무엇이 마커스의 이미지들을 이토록 소름 돋지만 계속 생각나게 할까? 의미가 사라지고 부차적인 사실들만 무성하게 존재하는 동시대 사회와 그 사회를 정처 없이 떠도는 실존적인 공포를 그의 그림에서 보는 것일까? 깊은 갈색으로 설렁설렁 칠해진 차가운 배경과 그 위를 웅기 웅기 떠다니는 형광의 초록 점들 사이의 대조는 회화에서 느껴지는 불안정함을 극대화한다.

마커스의 여느 작업과 같이 이 새로운 회화는 처음 봤을 때 기만적으로 친숙하게 느껴진다. 주제, 묘사된 장면, 혹은 그림이 주는 덧없음에 홀려 작품과 교감하다 보면 의미는 곧 거대한 모호함으로 다가오게 된다. 이러한 작업의 성격은 마커스만의 매력이라고 할 수 있다.

마커스는 물체의 어두운 이면을 드러내 보이는 데에 타고난 재주가 있다. 그동안의 작품에서 우리는 그가 소개하는 이면을 보면서 상상 속 혹은 실재하는 공포를 느끼기도 또 한편론 그 안에 숨어있는 해학을 찾을 수도 있었다. 하지만 이번 작품에서 마커스는 이러한 폭로성이 짙다고 할 수 있는 작업에서 벗어나 마치 무아지경에 빠진 듯한 혹은 경건하게 느껴지는 작업을 보여주고 있다. 마커스의 다른 시리즈를 주도하던 그로테스크함은 사라졌지만, 그 특유의 매혹적임은 아직 존재한다. 이러한 매혹적임은 잠시 멈춰 풀 한 줄 한 줄에 담긴 작가의 기예를 보달라는 마커스의 의도가 다분한 초대일까? 혹은 그의 작은 제스처들이 강박적으로 반복되면서 나타난 마커스의 헌신적이고도 단순한 노동의 결과일까?

마커스에게 각 회화 시리즈는 새로운 정신적이고 물질적인 탐구의 시작이고 그렇기 때문에 각각의 프로젝트들은 그의 작업세계의 중요한 이정표로 기능한다고 할 수 있다. 이런 면을 봤을 때 현재 작업은 특히 주목할만하다. 작품 속 이면에 존재하는 실존적 공허를 마주하고자 하는 마커스의 욕망은 그의 아름답고 구슬픈 신작들이 마커스의 통제를 점점 벗어나고 있을 수도 있다는 점을 작가와 우리가 의식하지 못하게 주의를 흐린다. 이번 작품에서 우리는 마커스가 창조해오던 기존의 세계관들에서 드디어 빠져나와 작가와 작업의 엄매임 그리고 이로 인해 새롭게 발아하는 형식적이고 물질적인 구성물들을 생생하게 목격하고 있는지도 모른다.

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

캘빈 마커스(1988년 샌프란시스코 출생)는 작가의 페르소나에 관심을 갖고 다분히 의도적인 형식적 결단과 개념적인 방법론을 통해 그만의 페르소나를 구축하는 작업을 한다. 이때 그의 작업은 그의 사적인 삶과 명시적으로 연관을 갖지는 않는다. 그의 혼합재료 회화와, 조각, 드로잉 작업에선 죽은 병사, 다소 사악하게 묘사된 자화상, 물고기 모양 도자기 등 인상적인 도상과 함께 꼼꼼한 기교, 우스꽝스런 유머를 볼 수 있다. 이러한 작업의 반복으로 파생되는 다양함은 캘빈 마커스 특유의 유희성이라고 할 수 있다. 또한 마커스는 여느 작가가 작품을 전시할때 넘겨잡기 쉬운 요소들과 작가의 작업을 가능하게 하는 구조 등에 관심을 쏟으며 미술 작품이 경험될때 실제하는 물리적이고 제도적인 구조들을 가시화 한다.

캘빈 마커스는 홍콩 K11 Musea (2019)와 달라스의 The Power Station (2017), 밀라노의 Peep-Hole (2015), 로스앤젤레스의 Public Fiction (2014) 등에서 개인전을 열었다. 최근 덴마크 홈레백 Louisiana Museum of Art에서 New Works in the Collection - From Abramovic to Warhol (2020), 시카고 Museum of Contemporary Art에서 Just Connect (2020), 뉴욕 Whitney Museum of American Art에서 Whitney Biennial 2019, 레바논 베이루트 Aishti Foundation에서 The Trick Brain (2017), 마이애미 Rubell Museum에서 High Anxiety: New Acquisitions (2016) 등 다양한 단체전을 가져왔다. 마커스의 작품은 노르웨이 오슬로 Astrup Fearnley Museet와 프랑스 Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, 홍콩 K11 Art Foundation, 로스앤젤레스 Museum of Contemporary Art, 시카고 Museum of Contemporary Art, 뉴욕 Museum of Modern Art, 미네아폴리스 Walker Art Center, 뉴욕 Whitney Museum of American Art에 영구소장 되어있다. 마커스는 현재 로스앤젤레스에서 거주하며 활동하고 있다.

**DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY**



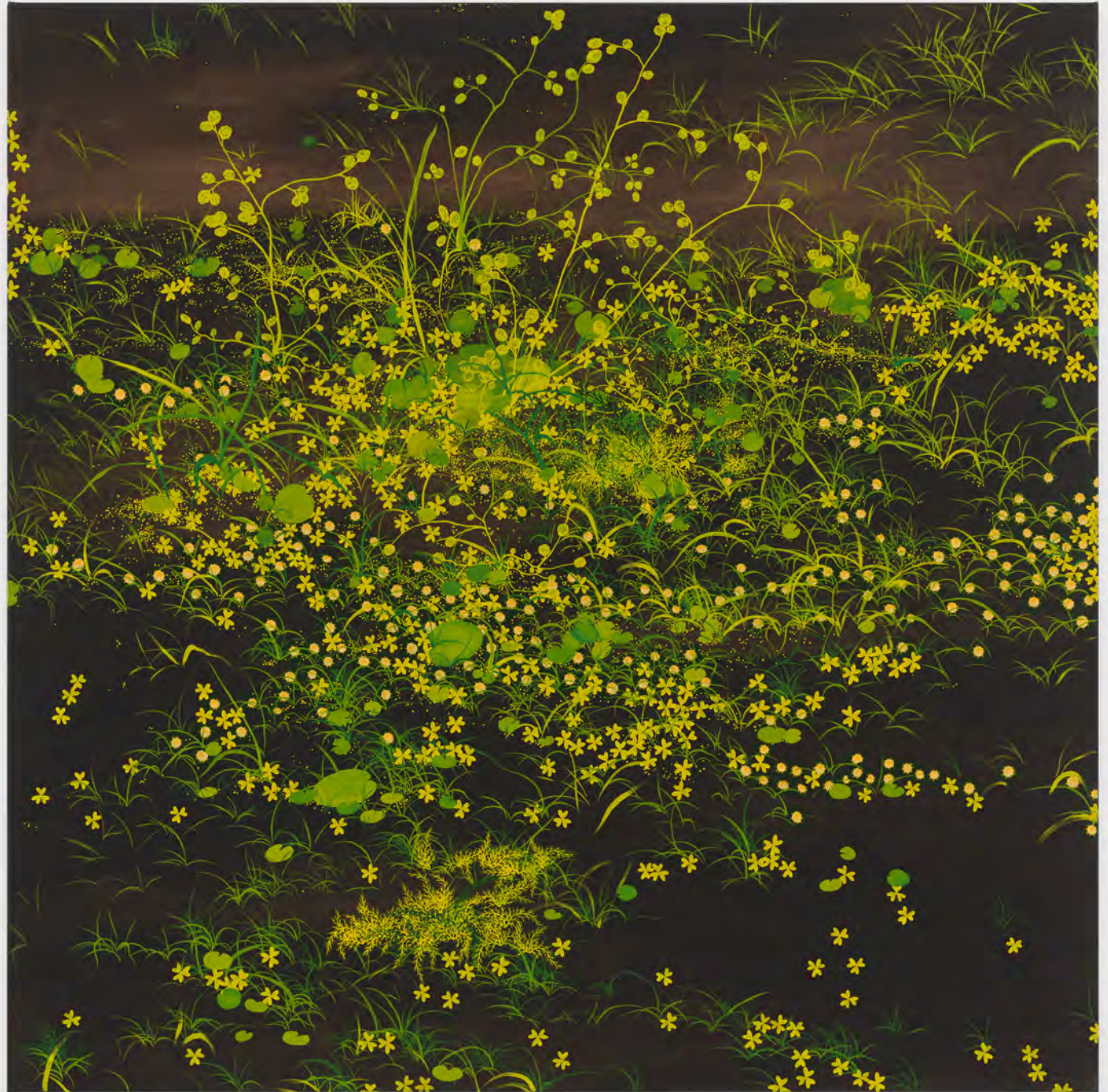
Calvin Marcus
Untitled Grass Painting, 2022
oil and emulsified gesso on
linen/canvas blend
60 x 60 x 1 1/8 inches
(152.4 x 152.4 x 2.9 cm)
(Inv# CMA 22.004)
\$90,000



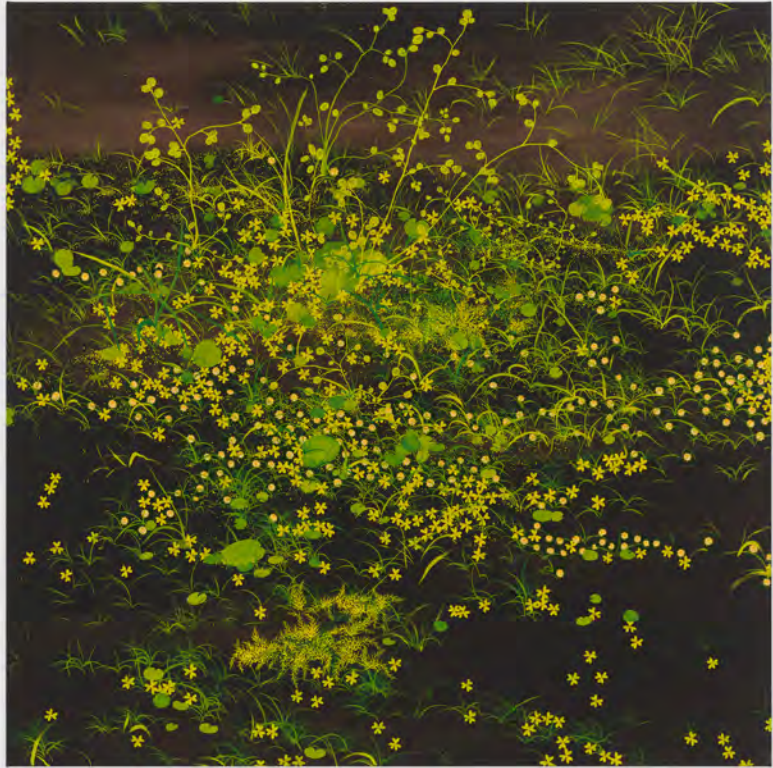




**DAVID
KORDANSKY
GALLERY**



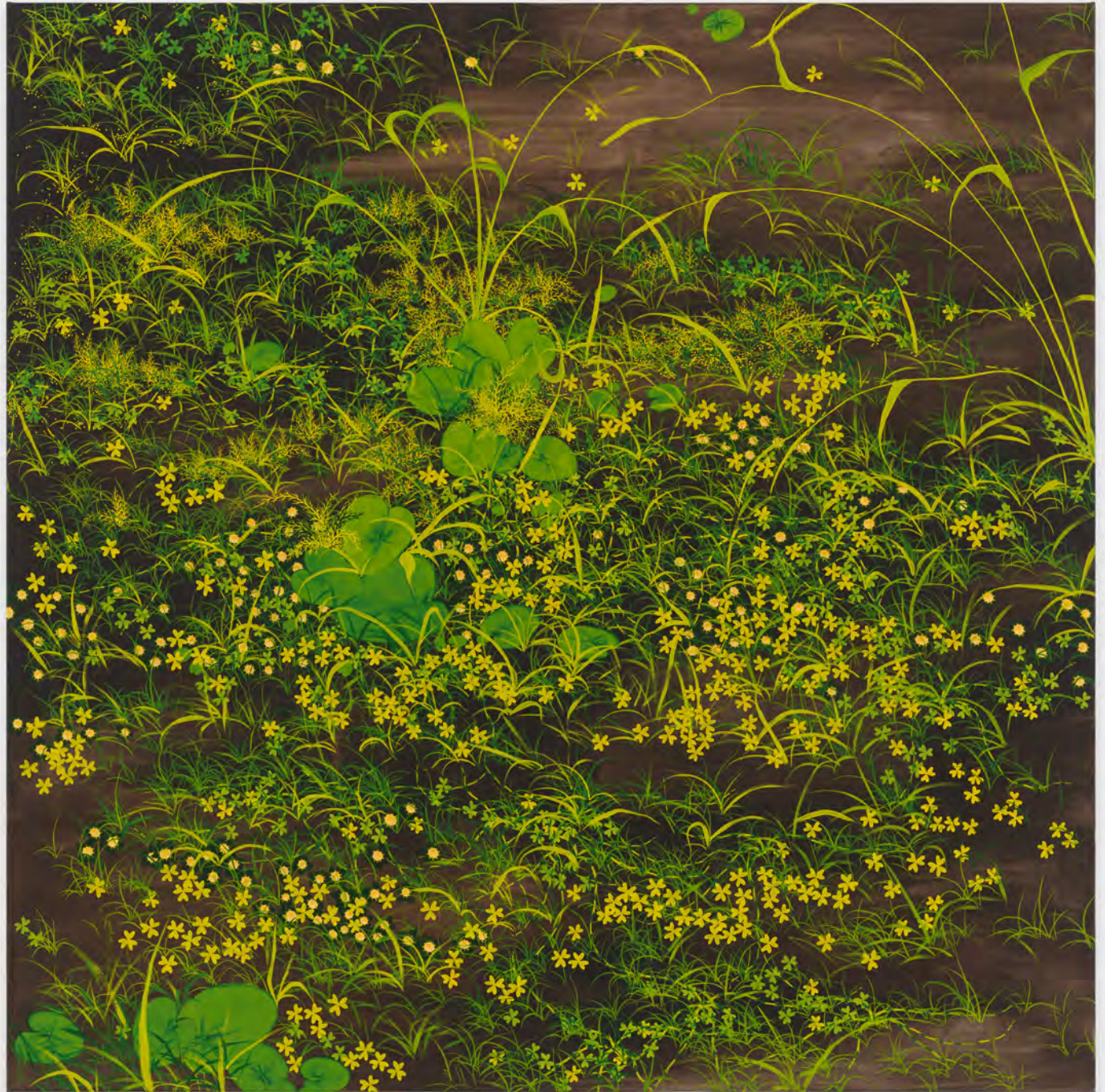
Calvin Marcus
Untitled Grass Painting, 2022
oil and emulsified gesso on
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(152.4 x 152.4 x 2.9 cm)
(Inv# CMA 22.005)
\$90,000



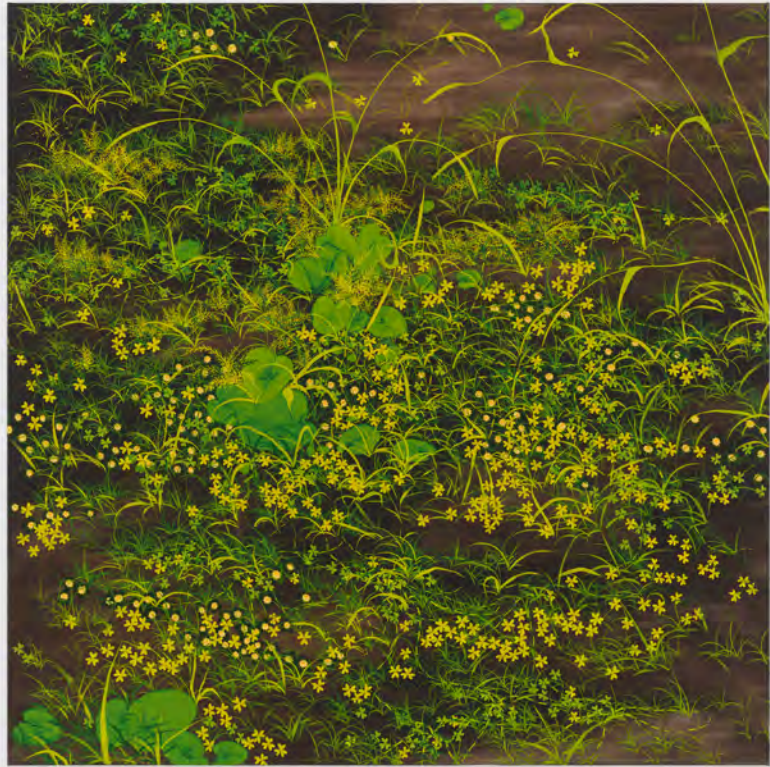




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KORDANSKY
GALLERY**



Calvin Marcus
Untitled Grass Painting, 2022
oil and emulsified gesso on
linen/canvas blend
60 x 60 x 1 1/8 inches
(152.4 x 152.4 x 2.9 cm)
(Inv# CMA 22.006)
\$90,000







**DAVID
KORDANSKY
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Calvin Marcus
Untitled Grass Painting, 2022
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60 x 60 x 1 1/8 inches
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(Inv# CMA 22.009)
\$90,000







DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

Selected Public Collections

Aïshti Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon
Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway
Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France
Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino, Italy
K11, Hong Kong/Shanghai/Beijing, China
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (MAMVP), Paris, France
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
Rubell Museum, Miami, FL
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

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SELECTED PRESS

Laster, Paul, "9 Los Angeles Artists to Look Out for at Frieze L.A.," *GalerieMagazine.com*, February 9, 2020

Galerie

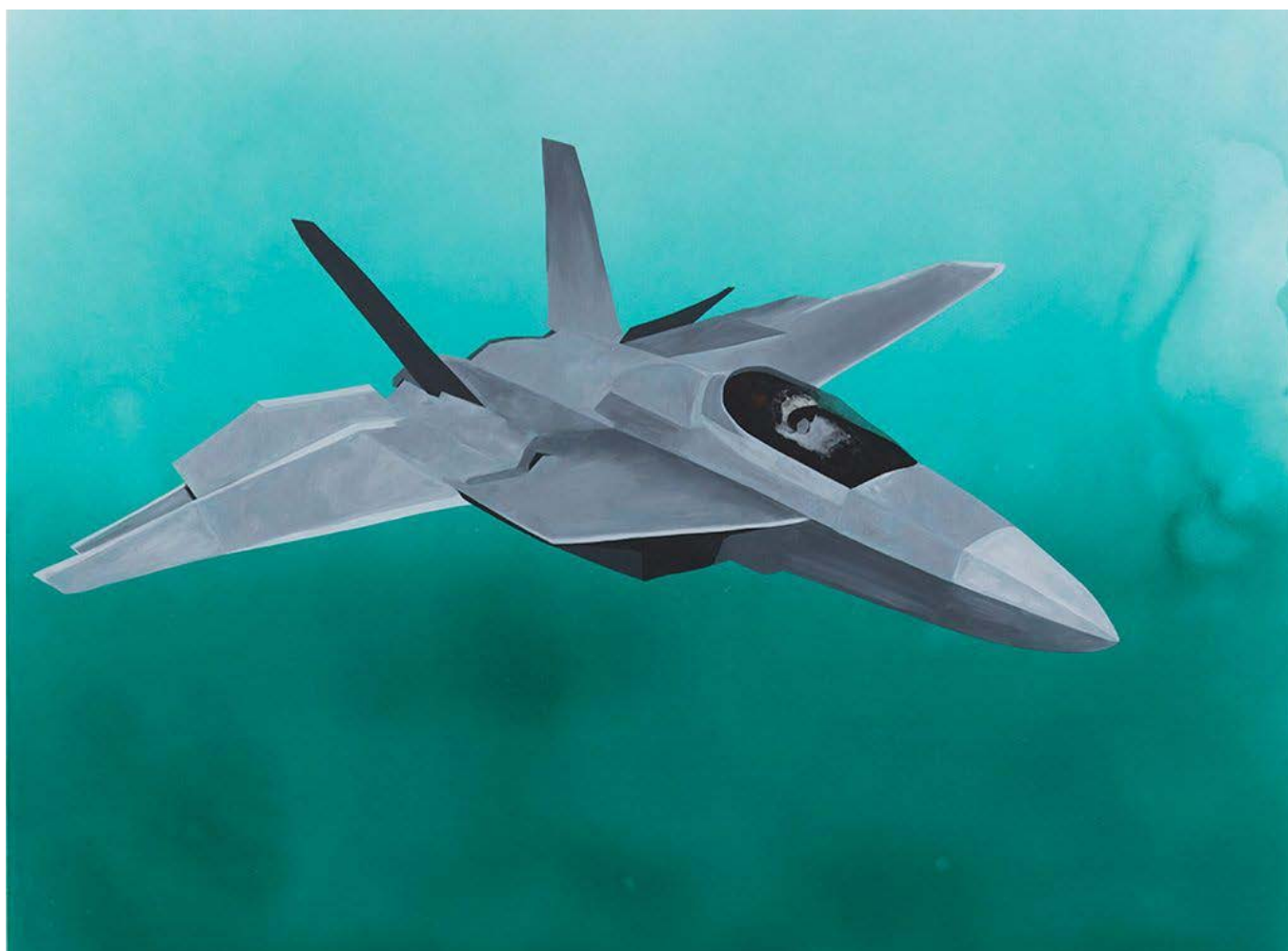
9 Los Angeles Artists to Look Out for at Frieze L.A.

In anticipation of the fair opening on February 14, we share a selection of artists presenting at the fair that are not-to-be-missed

By Paul Laster | February 9, 2020

Presenting 70 noteworthy galleries from around the world, Frieze Los Angeles triumphantly returns to Paramount Pictures Studios for its second edition February 14 – 16, 2020. Celebrating Los Angeles's position as a global arts center, the fair features a number of artists who were either born, trained or currently live and work in the city.

We've sifted through the best of the lot to find 9 established and emerging artists that are not-to-be-missed.



Calvin Marcus, *Jet*, 2019. Photo: Courtesy David Kordansky Gallery

Calvin Marcus at David Kordansky Gallery

San Francisco-born and L.A.-based, Calvin Marcus prides himself on making work that is “stripped down to the bare necessity.” Graduating with an MFA from UCLA in 2015, the buzzworthy talent made an immediate splash on the international art scene. He recently showcased a series of large-scale monochromatic green paintings with green ceramic chickens attached to their surfaces at Clearing in Brooklyn, as well as drawings of dead soldiers and grass at their outpost in Brussels. Exhibiting paintings of dog, rabbits and pigs in his first solo show with David Kordansky in 2019, Marcus presents a jumbo watercolor and oil painting of a jet in the gallery's booth at the fair.

Noam, Ben, "Calvin Marcus | Home is Where the Undulating, Wise, and Aquarist Scale is," *Flaunt*, January 2020, pp. 114-119



Noam, Ben, "Calvin Marcus | Home is Where the Undulating, Wise, and Aquarist Scale is," *Flaunt*, January 2020, pp. 114-119

F L A U N T

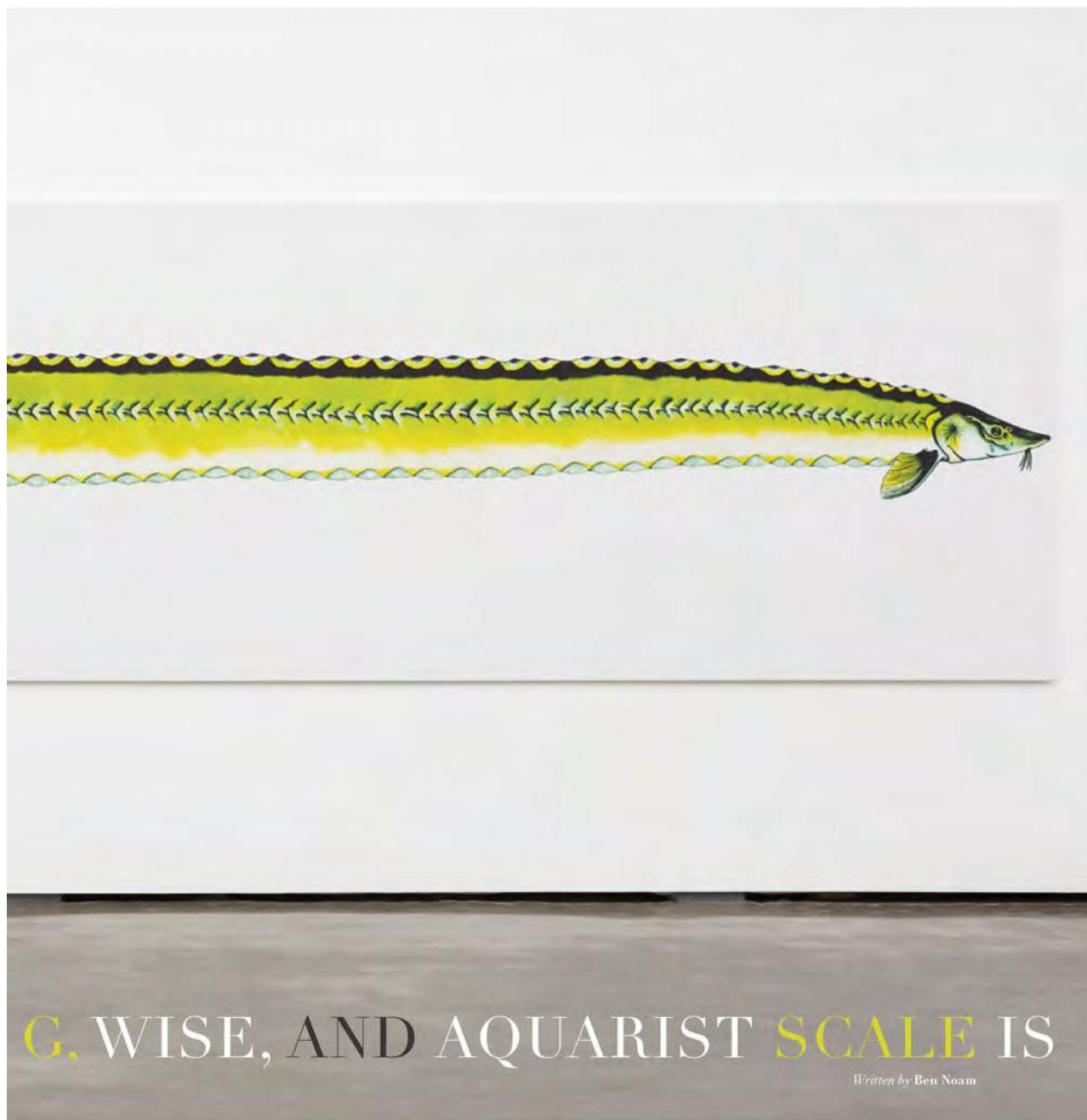
CALVIN MARCUS "STRETCH SURGEON" 2019. WATERCOLOR, VINYL, AND EMULSIFIED GESSO ON LINEN/CANVAS BLEND. 60 1/8 X 264 X 1 1/8 IN. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY, LOS ANGELES.



CALVIN MARCUS

HOME IS WHERE THE UNDULATING

Noam, Ben, "Calvin Marcus | Home is Where the Undulating, Wise, and Aquarist Scale is," *Flaunt*, January 2020, pp. 114-119



Mellin, Haley, "Go Hang a Salami I'm a Lasagna Hog," *Garage.Vice.com*, January 5, 2020

GARAGE

Go Hang a Salami I'm a Lasagna Hog

Calvin Marcus' surreal achievement currently on view at David Kordansky Gallery.

By Haley Mellin | January 5, 2020



Calvin Marcus, *GO HANG A SALAMI IM A LASAGNA HOG*, Installation View, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles (November 1, 2019 — January 11, 2020), Photography: Jeff McLane

Calvin Marcus' current solo show at David Kordansky Gallery, *GO HANG A SALAMI IM A LASAGNA HOG*, organizes the galleries into a one-way in and one-way out path, the first time an artist has transformed the laudable space into a channeled viewing experience. Unexpected scale shifts are initially experienced in the first gallery, which is installed with unique watercolors on canvas painted in a heroic scale (8-inch watercolor studies on paper were enlarged to become seven-foot paintings). During a studio visit, I viewed the watercolor sketches alongside the final paintings which commendably uphold the energy of the original doodle. It is refreshing to see watercolor, a less-utilized medium, on canvas at this scale. The works feel personal, possibly because the subject matter is personal, and possibly due to the materiality of the paint, as watercolor itself is a sympathetic medium.

Mellin, Haley, "Go Hang a Salami I'm a Lasagna Hog," *Garage.Vice.com*, January 5, 2020



"SHAME," 2019, WATERCOLOR, OIL, VINYL, GRAPHITE, AND EMULSIFIED GESSO ON LINEN/CANVAS BLEND PHOTOGRAPHY: LEE THOMPSON

The paintings have the capacity of being both basic and exceptionally charged: a Pinocchio with his nose cut off; the edge of a carpet; running dogs or are they chasing dogs? As Marcus described, "The image itself is undeniably strange. You can't read that image... There was no source imagery, that's just something I painted." Far from art as decoration, the works show Marcus' ability in developing a scalable language that is uniquely impactful. The paintings, as they emerge from Marcus' subconscious and imagination, are also in sense a psychological self-portrait.

Mellin, Haley, "Go Hang a Salami I'm a Lasagna Hog," *Garage.Vice.com*, January 5, 2020



GO HANG A SALAMI IM A LASAGNA HOG, INSTALLATION VIEW, DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY, LOS ANGELES (NOVEMBER 1, 2019 — JANUARY 11, 2020), PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFF MCLANE

A darkened Gallery 2 houses a sculpture lit from within and a single, framed photograph. The sculpture is a reduced 100:1 scale model of the artist's last studio, showing the exterior of an East Los Angeles storefront complete with lighting and a working exhaust fan. Again playing with a sense of scale and expectations, Marcus employed the same materials you would use to build a real studio—plaster, roofing paper, flashing, concrete.

A single photograph hangs opposite the studio model. Reminiscent of early Surrealist photography, the image portrays a seemingly mundane plate of asparagus, recalling Manet's iconic 1880 paintings of the vegetable. What appears to be 9-inch long vegetables are in fact the flowering stalks of 9-foot long Los Angeles-centric Century Plants

Mellin, Haley, "Go Hang a Salami I'm a Lasagna Hog," *Garage.Vice.com*, January 5, 2020



"ASPARAGUS 7 A.M.," 2019, CHROMOGENIC PRINT, 7 X 8 1/8 INCHES (17.8 X 20.6 CM), EDITION OF 8 WITH 2AP, PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFF MCLANE

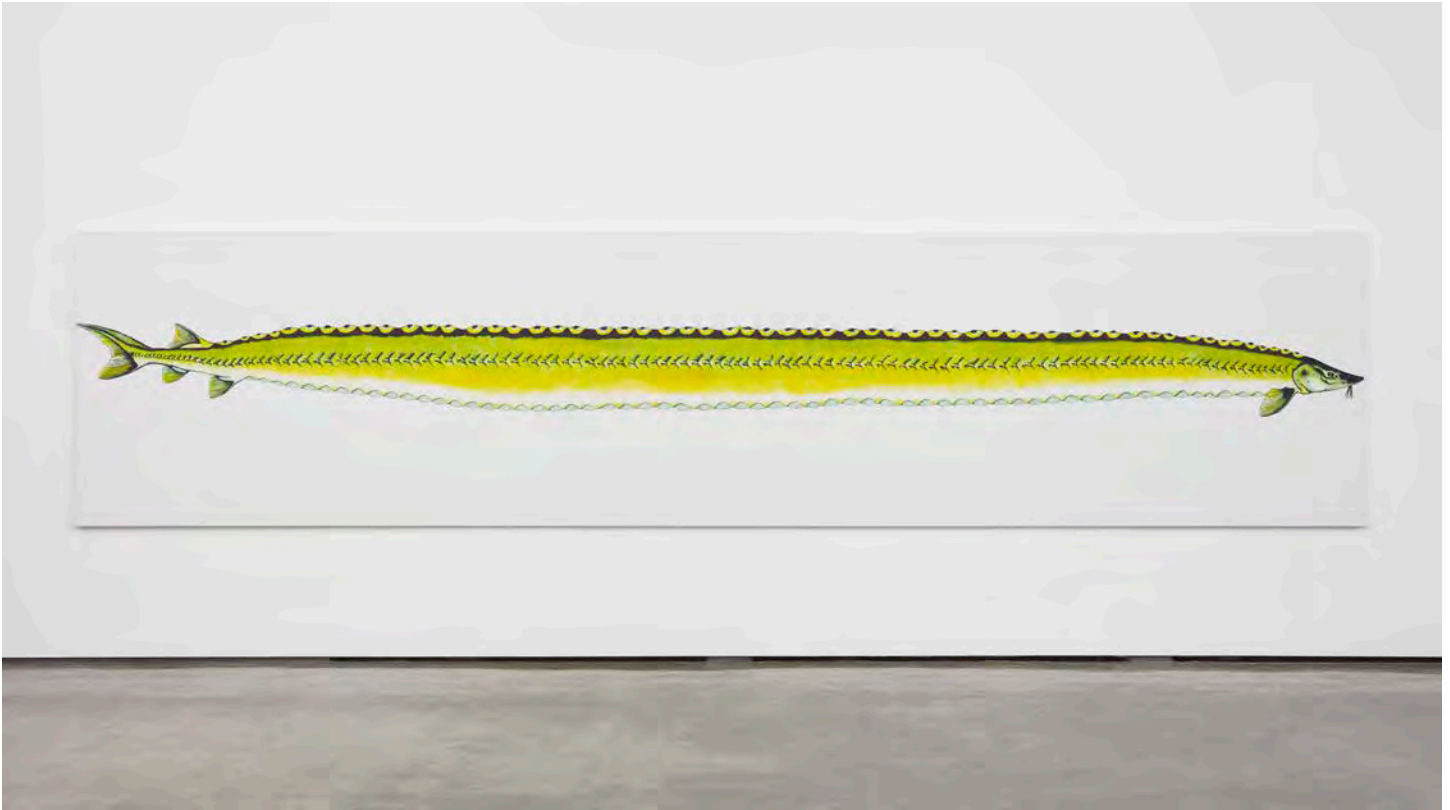
called Agave Americano. In order to produce this image, Marcus' friend, a surfboard maker, constructed a giant plate out of fiberglass. Marcus then assembled the oversized still life and it was photographed, optically reduced into an appearance of veggies. One can tell Marcus enjoyed the surreal play with optics, imagery and visual trickery as he re-represented this icon. It is a key moment in the show that nods to the clarity of this artist's practice.

Mellin, Haley, "Go Hang a Salami I'm a Lasagna Hog," *Garage.Vice.com*, January 5, 2020



"CORNER OF MAIN AND HANCOCK," 2016, WOOD, CONCRETE, STEEL, PLASTER, MASONITE, METAL LATHE, PLEXIGLASS, GLASS, GALVANIZED FLASHING, ROOFING PAPER, TAR, HOT GLUE, SCREWS, SILICONE, SILKSCREEN INK, VINYL, FLASHE, PASTE WAX, DOOR HARDWARE, COMPUTER FAN, ELECTRICAL PARTS, AND LIGHT BULB
PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFF MCLANE

The surreal scaling continues in Gallery 3 where Marcus debuts his new sturgeon series. All titled *Stretch Sturgeon*, the four paintings are on twenty-two-foot canvases and installed one per wall to create the visual effect of fish swimming clockwise in circles. The installation creates a dynamic vortex, encircling the viewer, as though one is standing in the center of a school of fish. Effectively disorienting, each fish painting measures the length of a stretch limousine, a size that references the longest sturgeon ever caught, at 24 feet, in the Russian Volga river. The continued familiar-unfamiliar aspect of the exhibition is heightened in this gallery with an expansiveness that moves toward abstraction.



"STRETCH STURGEON," 2019, WATERCOLOR, VINYL, AND EMULSIFIED GESSO ON LINEN/CANVAS BLEND PHOTOGRAPHY: LEE THOMPSON

Marcus' painting research is a self-reflexive and meditative mode of preparation. As he contemplated the sturgeon series, the artist looked to the Japanese culture of aquatic ink prints, where ink is painted on the fish itself, then pressed to paper, as well as the American culture of marlin taxidermy. In contemplating how he could make a fish feel heroic—an enigma within fishing culture of the once-in-a-lifetime catch, a fish that is a trophy—Marcus looked at the encyclopedic illustrative studies painted by fly fisherman who document every catch in watercolor.

This practice indulges the romantic notion that the paintings of fish are in fact self-portraits of the fisherman. Marcus' hand-painted watercolor washes of yellow and green document a tradition amongst fishermen who paint the fish they catch in a commemorative form of portraiture. The artist personalizes this folk-art painting tradition by enlarging the scale. In an Audubon-esque style of research diagrams, Marcus then made portraits of himself, via a fish, which feels at home within the artist's expanding oeuvre.

Brown, Jessica Bell, "Calvin Marcus," *Whitney Biennial 2019*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2019, pp. 48, 206-207, 286-287

47



Calvin Marcus, *Fish in Dish*, 2016. Glazed ceramic, 9 3/4 x 7 3/8 x 3 in. (24.1 x 19.7 x 7.62 cm)

47



Source image for *Dry-Cleaned Shirt*, 2015

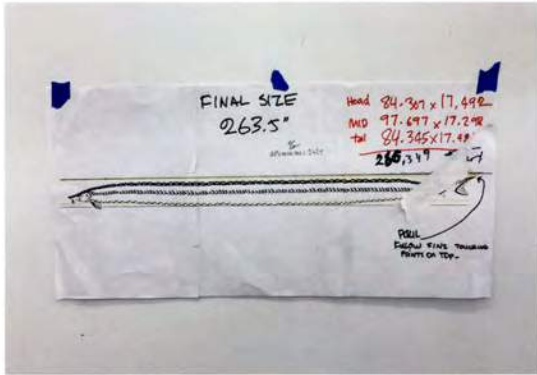


Source image for *Dry-Cleaned Shirt*, 2015



Study for *Dry-Cleaned Shirt*, 2015

Brown, Jessica Bell, "Calvin Marcus," *Whitney Biennial 2019*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2019, pp. 48, 206-207, 286-287



Sketch for *Stretched Sturgeon*, 2015



Sketch for *Small Studio*, 2018



Annotated sketch, 2016



Swatches for *Dead Soldier*, 2016

CALVIN MARCUS

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CALVIN MARCUS

Toggling between sculpture and painting, Calvin Marcus has a penchant for heterogeneity. His output traverses putrid green monochromatic paintings with sculptures of chicken carcasses secured at their centers, molded as self-portraits; childlike sketches of sinister heads; and sculptural readymades consisting of martini-glass-emblazoned resort shirts wrapped in plastic dry-cleaning sleeves. Sea animals appear both as teeny, anthropomorphized poolside loungers in roughly crafted bowls that show the indentations of the artist's fingers and as platters of deboned fish sculpted in clay alongside unappetizing noodles. Marcus pushes concrete ideas and themes to points of exhaustion, executing them with modest material means:

"I don't want to become a master of anything," he remarked to *Mousse* magazine in 2015.

For the series *Were Good Men* (2016), the artist made a set of drawings of soldiers fallen in leaves of grass, then projected the sketches onto linen in order to blow them up to lifelike scale. Marcus crops the bloodied bodies, with bulging eyes, rotting black teeth, and tongues outstretched, with a filmic sensibility. Viewers seem to witness the millisecond after a bullet's violent impact, the moment at which each man takes his last breath. Not only has Marcus created a panoramic scene of the grotesqueries of war, he manages to capture the psychic charge of fear and the inevitability of death. Evoking George Grosz, Otto Dix, and Marsden Hartley's expressionist "portraits" of officers, as well as the Buddhist-informed Japanese tradition of *kusōzu* (the depiction of bodies in successive stages of decomposition), Marcus's soldiers are a site for both Whitmanesque contemplation and recoil. The men also offer proxies for the ghastly faces Marcus has created in his self-portraits, suggesting how the devilish actually resides in warped versions of our own perspectives. *JBB*

Zara, Janelle, "An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church," *NYTimes.com*, November 14, 2019

T The New York Times Style Magazine

An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church

Calvin Marcus's color-washed works, which feature surfers, bodybuilders and dead fish, defy narrative.

By Janelle Zara | November 14, 2019



The artist Calvin Marcus in his Los Angeles studio with one of his two dogs, Francis, a 3-year-old mutt. Chantal Anderson

Zara, Janelle, "An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church," *NYTimes.com*, November 14, 2019



When Marcus found his work space in 2016, the building had long been vacant. Now, after an intensive renovation, he uses the first floor as his studio and lives on the mezzanine level. Chantal Anderson

In Los Angeles, daylight sifts into Calvin Marcus's studio through panes of pastel-stained glass set in lancet windows. The San Francisco-born artist has lived and worked in this cavernous former synagogue turned Baptist church, constructed in 1928, since May. He found the property in 2016, by which time unknown years of neglect had led to severe structural damage. Nevertheless, "I had a vision for how it could be a great studio," Marcus said recently, ahead of the opening of his current solo show, "Go Hang a Salami Im a Lasagna Hog," at David Kordansky Gallery. During a painstaking three-year renovation, he transformed the building's mezzanine level into a private living space for himself, his girlfriend and their two dogs (Bill, a giant schnauzer, and Francis, a small mutt), while the vast ground floor is now a studio with towering exposed wood-beam ceilings. There's ample room for both dogs to blow off steam, and for Marcus, 31, to make the unexpected, often absurd paintings and mixed-media sculptures for which he's known.

"There's not a narrative or linear story line to create from seeing all the paintings together," Marcus said, referring to a handful of five- to eight-foot-tall paintings that hung on the pristine white walls of his space. Dressed in his usual studio attire of a white T-shirt and paint-stained white cargo pants, he was still deliberating the final lineup of works for the show. In washy strokes of watercolor, oil and gouache, the compositions depicted intentionally disjointed, unnervingly bizarre scenes: In one, a crinkled arm reaching upward, locked in a handshake with the divine; in another, a sallow ogre-like figure staring out at the viewer with a warm, wide-eyed gaze. "I'm looking at the overall palette," Marcus said of his selection criteria. "I really want this to be the most diverse set of images."

"Diverse" is an apt description of Marcus's practice as a whole. In the short time since he graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles's master of fine arts program in 2015, his work has mined the same vein of surreal humor that characterizes the paintings in his current show to unpredictable effect. For his first solo exhibition with David Kordansky in 2016, Marcus screen-printed linen button-down leisure shirts with martini glass motifs and presented them in the gallery on dry cleaner's hangers still wrapped in plastic. His work has also included watercolors of bodybuilders and ceramic chickens mounted on monochrome aluminum panels. At the 2019 Whitney Biennial, he debuted five large-scale paintings, one of which depicted an elongated snowman. Throughout, Marcus's source material has remained defiantly uncomplicated: "Something just pops into my head, something that I've either seen in real life or experienced firsthand," he explained. "Then I draw and draw, and stuff starts to happen."

While there's still work to be done on his studio (the original window frames are showing their age), Marcus is happy to call the building home. "It's amazing to wake up here," he said. The stained-glass windows and wall-mounted candelabras retain the air of a place of worship, while the work tables covered with squeeze bottles of paint confirm its new life as an artist's studio. With Francis at his feet, Marcus sat down to answer T's artist questionnaire.

Zara, Janelle, "An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church," *NYTimes.com*, November 14, 2019



Marcus's solo show at David Kordansky Gallery features works on a variety of scales. At the smaller end is this sculpture of an East Los Angeles storefront, which has its own working ventilation fan and lights. Chantal Anderson

What is your day like? How much do you sleep, and what's your work schedule?

I wake up, drink coffee, take the dogs for a run, and then work until 6 or 7. I try to go to the gym, and then maybe meet somebody for a drink.

How many hours of creative work do you think you do in a day?

It depends. When I'm working on a show, I'm not really doing creative work — I'm mostly doing the labor to make the objects or painting. But before that happens, I'm being creative all day.

What's the first piece of art you ever made?

I've been drawing and making stuff my whole life. I grew up in the sort of liberal hippie community where there are a lot of art classes, and I took ceramics every summer at the community college. But I was probably in grad school when I made my first real piece of art.

Zara, Janelle, "An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church," *NYTimes.com*, November 14, 2019



Marcus used himself as a model for this composition. Chantal Anderson

What's the first work you ever sold? For how much?

Something that I made out of cotton cord that I spray-painted black and strung back and forth in a small wooden frame. I think it was \$1,000 in 2010.

When you start a new piece, where do you begin?

Each painting comes from a very different place. Sometimes I have these ideas for pictures that I want to make, and then I'll draw it, or take a picture and then draw from the picture. From these sketches I move into a color-study process where I figure out how to build the rest of the picture.

How do you know when you're done?

When the picture or the sculpture is achieved most efficiently. I don't ever have any confusion about whether the thing I'm doing is done or not. It's more that I have this little plan, and as soon as it's been achieved, it's done.

Zara, Janelle, "An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church," *NYTimes.com*, November 14, 2019



The artist's large-scale paintings often start out as smaller works. Chantal Anderson

How many assistants do you have?

One.

What music do you play when you're making art?

Neil Young.

Is there a meal you eat on repeat when you're working?

Sardines and crackers. I didn't know that canned fish could be delicious, and then I went to Lisbon. I brought a bunch of it back in my suitcase.

Are you bingeing on any shows right now?

I've just been rewatching "The Sopranos."

Zara, Janelle, "An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church," *NYTimes.com*, November 14, 2019



Marcus's 2014 "Green Calvin" series consists of monochrome paintings affixed with ceramic rotisserie chickens of the same color. Each bird's body features a depiction of the artist's face frozen in a different expression. Chantal Anderson

What's the weirdest object in your studio?

I have a bunch of nine-foot-tall agave blooms that I cut down on the side of the Pacific Coast Highway, but I can't tell you why.

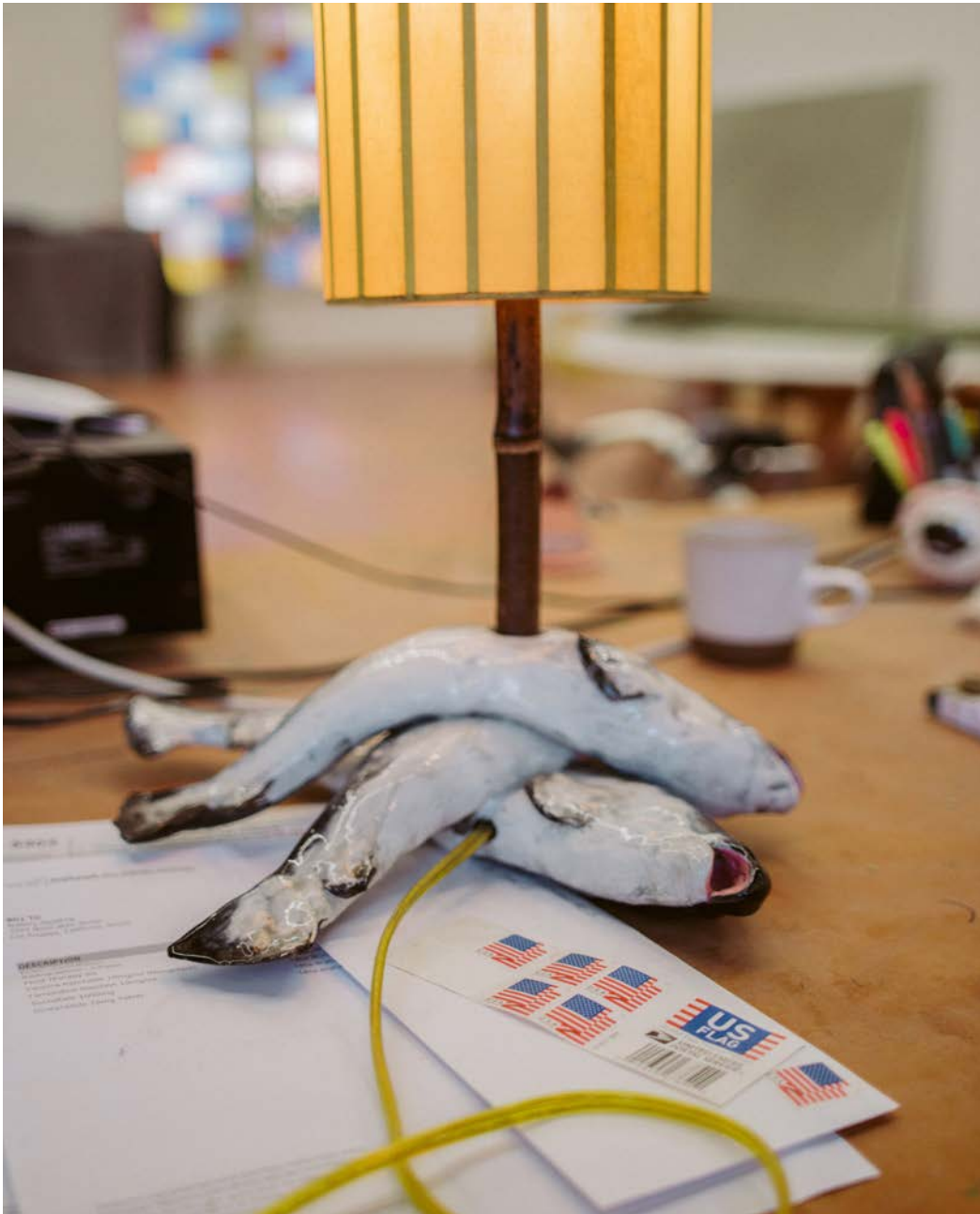
How often do you talk to other artists?

All the time, every day. Some are local, some are in New York. We usually talk about normal stuff, not necessarily specific to art. But if we do talk about art, it might be about some show they are working on, I am working on or some frustration about something that's happening.

What's the last thing that made you cry?

A really not-so-great movie that was playing on an airplane.

Zara, Janelle, "An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church," *NYTimes.com*, November 14, 2019



Marcus has made pottery since his childhood. Here, his sculpture "Lamp" (2017), crafted from bamboo, paper, wood and ceramic. Chantal Anderson

What do you usually wear when you work?

I like Uniqlo's white undershirts, and I usually buy Dickies Double Knee pants. They have a pocket on the side of your leg so you don't have to put your cellphone near your crotch.

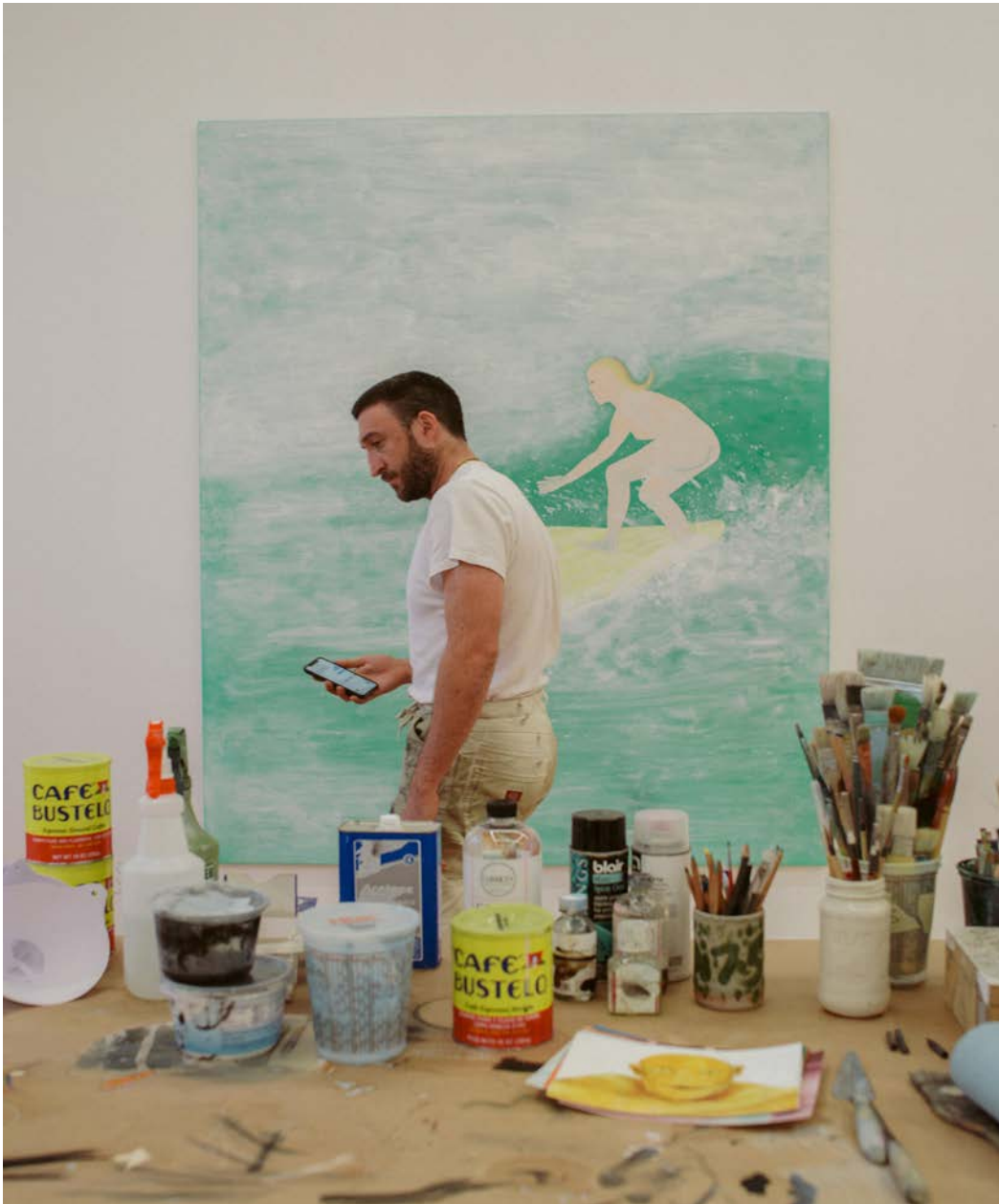
What do you bulk buy with most frequency?

White T-shirts and gallons of watercolor.

What's your worst habit?

Drinking alcohol.

Zara, Janelle, "An Artist Who Makes Absurdist Paintings in a Former Church," *NYTimes.com*, November 14, 2019



The artist with an untitled work. Chantal Anderson

What embarrasses you?

Not recognizing someone who recognizes me.

Do you exercise?

I have to run with the dogs because Bill has a ton of energy. He's a working-dog breed, so they're high-strung in the first place, and if I don't take him to get any exercise, he's pretty crazy.

What's your favorite artwork by someone else?

A poster that Charley Ray made for his 1994 exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern. It's an amazing artwork unto itself: He made a plastic cast of himself and dressed it up in his own clothes and generated this poster where he's out on the coast with a sailboat. I just thought it was a genius artwork, a very smart way of thinking about sculpture.

VULTURE

Whitney Biennial Artists Share Mood Boards for Their Works

By Carl Swanson | May 16, 2019



What was Calvin Marcus thinking about when he made *No Need Here* (2019)? Photo: Image courtesy the artist; Clearing; New York and Brussels; and David Kordansky Gallery; Los Angeles

The Whitney Biennial opens tomorrow, and it's a fluid and uncluttered installation. There isn't just one follow-the-red-line, gallery-by-gallery processional narrative in which to see the works or to "get" some particular message. Which seems to be of a piece with the show's somewhat dreamlike curatorial stance. "Rather than [presenting] a series of monographic rooms," notes its co-curator, Rujeko Hockley, the show is hanging the work to, it is hoped, allow you to feel its complicity and resonance with nearby work, or with pieces dangling from the ceiling or stacked up or slouched against the wall across that gallery. "When you go from one room to the next room, you have the memory of the other room in mind," suggests Hockley.

In Hockley's introduction to the catalogue, titled "The End of the World or the Beginning of the Next," she speaks generally about the conditions that both generated the art in the show and the context in which it is seen: "All we can know is that we don't know, and that state of not knowing is itself deeply unsettling." (Our critic Jerry Saltz wrote that while the show can feel "a little locked in, careful, and polite," it left him buoyed by its "new ideas of the poetic and subjective" and what he called its "sustainable aesthetics" — artists "making new things with old tropes.")

The show's catalogue is also unusually open-ended because Hockley and her co-curator, Jane Panetta, gave each artist two "process" pages to scrapbook-poeticize the backstory of the work they show in the Biennial. "We really tried to leave it as open as we could," says Hockley, who admits going back and forth with some artists to get it right. "We want to give people lots of room to play." There was a practical aspect to this decision: Not all of the pieces that appear in the exhibition had been finished by the catalogue's deadline. In some cases, rough drafts, basically, are shown, but often the catalogue entries could be read as conceptual mood boards, a little peek into the creative process, or at least paste-up concerns, of the artists. The idea was for the catalogue to provide "as broad a context for each artist" as possible, Hockley says.

These five artists — Lucas Blalock, Ilana Harris-Babou, Maia Ruth Lee, Calvin Marcus, and Troy Michie — agreed to let us publish them.

BERLINARTLINK

Escapism // New Works by Calvin Marcus at Clearing Gallery NYC

Nora Kovacs | April 6, 2018

Los Angeles-based artist Calvin Marcus' work can be characterized by its humorous, playful, and often psychological qualities. Known for his embrace of the subconscious through automatic drawing practices, Marcus employs painting and drawing as meditative processes, in which the mind is encouraged to run wild and meaning is only interpreted after the fact. Following in the footsteps of his surrealist predecessors, Marcus is concerned with unfiltered ideas, underlying fears, and unspoken desires, which can only be channeled when the limiting structures of the psyche are unlocked, when our inner thoughts can somehow manage to escape. Unlike André Masson, Joan Miró, or Jean Arp, however, Marcus alludes to something more sinister in his work, and that is particularly the case in his latest solo exhibition at Clearing's Upper East Side gallery location.



Calvin Marcus; 'Automatic Drawing', 2018, oil crayon, flashe on gessoed linen

In 'Automatic Drawings,' Marcus presents the audience with a stripped down and subtle continuation of his previous approach, while maintaining its strange, unsettling, and comical edge. Moving away from the silly, colorful, and dreamlike canvases and installations that his viewers are accustomed to seeing, Marcus' 'Automatic Drawings' are entirely black and white, evoking a nightmare more than anything else. An unnerving mélange of seemingly familiar cartoonish characters and repetitive forms inhabits the otherwise empty canvases. A black, bubbling cauldron recurs in multiple drawings, a horizontally positioned skyscraper creeps into view, while dark, beady eyes peer out from the blank void. It is as if the white canvases are plagued by these ominous figures; a clear mind troubled by dark thoughts.



Calvin Marcus; 'Automatic Drawing', 2018, oil crayon, flashe on gessoed linen

"The artist's mind isn't just a site of production but a route for escape," the exhibition's press release states, thus begging the question: If this is where the artist escapes to, what on earth does his reality look like? Grotesque and looming, it seems that when purposeful thinking is removed from the creative process, the artist's mind goes to a rather dark place. As viewers, we can sense the same helplessness that we might feel in a dream, not being able to run fast enough from an unknown and impending doom.

Kovacs, Nora, "Escapism // New Works by Calvin Marcus at Clearing Gallery NYC," *BerlinArtLink.com*, April 6, 2018



Calvin Marcus; 'Automatic Drawing', 2018, oil crayon, flashe on gessoed linen

In terms of the mind acting as a tool for escape from the harsh realities of life, it appears to be failing us, allowing confusion and chaos to seep back in. Our fantasies, collages of convoluted and nonlinear excerpts from previous memories, encounters, and emotions, begin to topple inwards upon themselves, trapping us in an 'Alice in Wonderland' sort of spell. Where is the escape button?

Perhaps it is not, then, the artist himself who escapes through the act of creating, but the thoughts and emotions that are usually suppressed, finding a way out through the artist's mind. Marcus' 'Automatic Drawings' are honest and raw in their depictions of the human mind in all its perversity, but they are not particularly interesting to look at. While they may be a source of introspection for the artist, revealing a nervous, trippy, anxious, and agitated individual, they are difficult to connect to as someone on the outside. Previous works, like 'Green Calvin' and 'me with tongue,' had a certain brightness and compelling creepiness about them, inviting us to get to know more about the artist, but Marcus' latest work is less exciting. Images appear and dissolve into the canvases, but the artist fails to call much to our attention. In fact, he repels us with the monotonous and menacing subject matter of his work. In their black and white minimalism, Marcus' drawings seem to reduce the power and variety of our minds to a series of cliché, psychedelic visuals. What we are left with is an exercise in automatism that barely scrapes the surface of what the subconscious has to offer; a bad trip, if you ask me, or maybe this is just not the type of escape that I was hoping for.



Calvin Marcus; 'Automatic Drawing', 2018, oil crayon, flashe on gessoed linen

Art in America

CALVIN MARCUS

Clearing

Calvin Marcus's exhibition at Clearing, titled "Were Good Men," had a kind of nervous energy running through it. The show assembled thirty-nine oil-stick paintings whose crude rendering recalls that of children's drawings. All the paintings have backgrounds the color of dry earth and bear grasslike masses of bright green vertical or diagonal marks—sparse on some panels, dense on others—and about half of them feature the figure of a dead soldier lying on the green turf. The soldiers have contorted bodies clad in variously colored uniforms, bloated faces tinged purple, green, or brown, bulging eyes, and long, pink tongues lolling out.



Calvin Marcus:
Dead Soldier, 2016,
oil stick, Cel-Vinyl,
watercolor, and
emulsified gesso on
linen-canvas blend,
101½ by 79 inches;
at Clearing.

The strength of the show was greatly reinforced by the large scale of the canvases (all around one hundred by eighty inches) and by the mazelike installation in which they were displayed, with the works hung in a sequence that coiled along the walls of three connected rooms, producing a dizzying panoramic effect. Walking through the space was like wandering among constantly shifting vistas of a hallucinatory combat zone. The dead soldiers, frozen in bizarre dancelike postures, their arms flung about, their hair entwined with the grass, looked both pitiful and ridiculous. Their uniforms and insignia appeared to have come from different nations and historical eras, and the overall scene brought to mind the medieval genre of the *danse macabre*, with its poignant depiction of the universality of death.

Since Marcus's first solo show, in 2014, the young Los Angeles-based artist has developed a body of work that includes painting and drawing, sculpture, ceramics, mixed-medium objects, and installations. Much of this work reflects a preoccupation with personal and artistic identity. He has made various self-portraits, for instance, including crayon drawings and paintings in which he appears with his tongue sticking out, and ceramic pieces showing his face sculpted on the bodies of clay chickens attached to monochrome green paintings. His recent exhibition at David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles was titled with a spoonerism of his name: "Malvin Carcus." It featured custom-made linen shirts that he designed and wore for some time before sending them to dry cleaners and presenting them in the gallery complete with receipts and plastic wrappings. Accompanying these works were large "Automatic Drawings"—canvases he covered with gestural marks and doodles made with black oil crayon and Flashe paint. Presented together, the shirts and paintings could be viewed as an ironic commentary on society's fetishization of the male artist's hand and personality, but they also embraced and reinforced this myth.

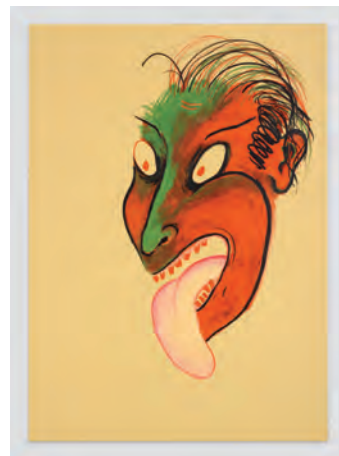
Marcus's new series is a welcome departure from such solipsistic previous work. Begun as a group of small crayon drawings, which were then projected onto the canvases and traced, the paintings combine vigorous mark-making with evocative imagery. In the agitated images of dead soldiers, Marcus transposes questions of male identity and representation into terrain broader than that of his prior investigations, tapping into themes and anxieties concerning the human hunger for power and drive to self-destruct.

—Tatiana Istomina

“Staying the Course,” *Patron*, April/May 2016, pp. 60-61

STAYING THE COURSE

Outgrowing his gallery space thrice, popular Los Angeles gallerist David Kordansky returns to the Dallas Art Fair for the second time, featuring the work of emerging artist Calvin Marcus.



Amere thirteen years ago, David Kordansky opened his original eponymous gallery in Chinatown. Of humble size, it represented eight emerging artists, several of which were fellow CalArts grads. He relocated to Culver City a few years later with an expanded artist roster of international renown and introduced a second gallery to the area in 2011. In September 2014, he reopened yet again in a super-sized 20,000-square-foot space that was formerly a 1930s food market, an auto dealership, and a martial arts center. Cited as an “L.A. heavyweight,” it’s safe to say Kordansky has enjoyed a successful career as a gallerist. “A favorite dealer among Dallas collectors, we are thrilled to welcome his gallery back to Dallas—it will be one of this year’s highlights,” says Dallas Art Fair co-founder Chris Byrne. Listed annually as one of the top 200 art collectors in the world by *Art News*, Howard Rachofsky visited with Kordansky on his second turn at the Dallas Art Fair.

Howard Rachofsky: *Could you talk about the gallery’s connection/relationship with Dallas?*

David Kordansky: Our gallery has always enjoyed a close relationship with Dallas and its collectors. This year three of our artists will have institutional solo shows in the city: Mai-Thu Perret opened an exhibition at the Nasher Sculpture Center on March 12. In September, Kathryn Andrews’s MCA Chicago exhibition also arrives at the Nasher, and then Pietro Roccasalva installs an exhibition at The Power Station timed to coincide with his second solo show at our gallery in November.

HR: *Why are you choosing to exhibit in the Dallas Art Fair?*

DK: This will be our second trip to the Dallas Art Fair, and like our regular visits to TWO x TWO, we see it as an important and meaningful opportunity to deepen our ties to the Dallas community, community, which includes not only one of the strongest concentrations of leading collectors in the world, but also some of my favorite people. The Fair is a great platform, in this decentralized art world, to showcase an individual artist, and to bring a new body of work directly to a curious audience.

HR: *What works are you bringing? Why are you bringing these works to Dallas?*

DK: We’ll present new works by Calvin Marcus, an emerging Los Angeles artist who debuted his first solo exhibition at the gallery in January. On view in Dallas will be his recent “me with

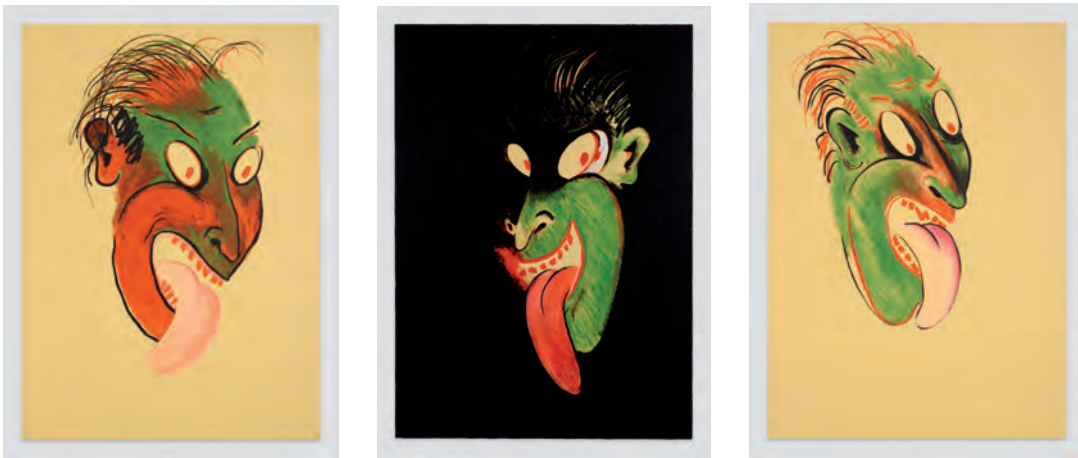


David Kordansky Gallery, Photo by Fredrik Nilsen

Above, left: David Kordansky. Photo by Fredrik Nilsen; above, right: Calvin Marcus, *me with tongue*, 2016, oil stick, Cel-Vinyl, liquid watercolor, and emulsified gesso on linen/canvas blend, 84 x 60 x 1.5 in. Opposite, from left: Calvin Marcus, *me with tongue*, 2016, oil stick, Cel-Vinyl, liquid watercolor, and emulsified gesso on linen/canvas blend, 84 x 60 x 1.5 in.; Calvin Marcus, *me with tongue*, 2016, oil stick, Cel-Vinyl, liquid watercolor, and emulsified gesso on linen/canvas blend, 84 x 60 x 1.5 in.; Calvin Marcus, *me with tongue*, 2016, oil stick, Cel-Vinyl, liquid watercolor, and emulsified gesso on linen/canvas blend, 84 x 60 x 1.5 in. All images courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA. Photography by Marten Elder.

“Staying the Course,” *Patron*, April/May 2016, pp. 60-61

INTERVIEW BY HOWARD RACHOFSKY



tongue” pictures: demonic-looking crayon-on-paper self-portraits meticulously enlarged to the scale and presence of paintings. Complementing these faces will be a series of ceramic sculptures, as well as leisure shirts designed, worn, and stained by the artist. Calvin takes each soiled uniform to a different Los Angeles dry cleaner, who effectively finishes the artwork, framing it in their particular bagging. Calvin’s practice is a rare blend, particular to Los Angeles, of material sensitivity, conceptual heft, and personal vision.

HR: *What distinguishes your selection of gallery artists? Is it a particularly L.A.-based group?*

DK: Exactly half of our 36 artists are based in Los Angeles. I

started my gallery in the city’s Chinatown neighborhood, showing classmates and friends I met while earning an MFA at CalArts. In the last thirteen years we have grown the gallery by putting these artists in conversation with artists from other locales and generations. All of these artists, whether from near or far, whether young or old, share the unique spirit of this city. The idiosyncrasy, material alchemy, and visual pleasure characteristic of Los Angeles are a current running through my program.

Thanks David. Anecdotally, we recently acquired a Calvin Marcus painting from the last show, so we’re excited to see your presentation at the Dallas Art Fair.



Howard Rachofsky, photo by SaraDeal

ABOUT HOWARD RACHOFSKY

A Dallas native, Howard Rachofsky was a Hedge fund manager for thirty years. He started the Regal group of companies in the 1970s and acted as the Managing Partner of Regal Securities Investment, L. P. and President and Chairman of the Board of Regal Capital Company. Howard has served, and continues to serve, on several non-profit boards, including Dia Center for the Arts in New York, the AT&T Performing Arts Center, the Dallas Symphony Foundation, and Lumin Education. With his wife Cindy, he hosts TWO x TWO for AIDS and Art, which benefits amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research, and the Dallas Museum of Art’s Contemporary Collection Program. Over the past 17 years, TWO x TWO has raised over \$60 million in support of these organizations.

Gregg, Samantha, "Calvin Marcus," *Kaleidoscope*, Highlights, Fall 2015, pp. 42-43



As visitors arrived to Calvin Marcus's solo debut in New York they may have seen, down the way and standing opposite from the main entrance of the gallery, the anodized aluminum door to the artist's studio in Los Angeles. Before immediately turning right into the first gallery, visitors may have also caught a glimpse of an indiscernible image painted in a rectangle on the top half of the door—but then again, it was far away and not en route to the main event. After snaking through a sea of bright green monochrome paintings, each colonized by a single ceramic chicken (grinning, teeth out), the third and final gallery space presented viewers with the exterior-facing side of said door. The aforementioned image nestled in the rectangle now came into focus: a rudimentary clock suggesting that Marcus was, like his transplanted door, "out of the office." The defunct studio door was similarly inoperable: having been shipped across the country and installed alongside other painted works from Marcus's studio, this work had not been titled, was not for sale, and, unlike its more traditional and chicken-adorned allies, could be viewed from both sides.

Today, the space in Los Angeles where the door once was is now vacant. Where it previously divided Marcus's studio from his domestic area, one can now view recent artistic productions (one group of which will soon be on view at Peep-Hole in Milan; another opens next year at David Kordansky Gallery in Los Angeles) from a number of humble vantage points, including the artist's bed, couch, refrigerator, breakfast table, and, most notably, closet.

Calvin Marcus (American, b. 1988) is an artist who lives and works in Los Angeles. He is represented by David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, and C L E A R I N G, New York/Brussels.

Calvin Marcus's upcoming projects include solo exhibitions at Peep-Hole, Milan, in November, and at David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, in January; and a two-person show with Chadwick Rantanen at C L E A R I N G in Brussels in January.



Marcus is one of the artists invited to take part in this fall's Kaleidoscope Instagram Residency program.

Follow at [INSTAGRAM.COM/KALEIDOSCOPEMAGAZINE](https://www.instagram.com/kaleidoscope_magazine)

Samantha Gregg is a writer based in Los Angeles.

Image: Calvin Marcus *Dry Cleaned Shirt with Martinis*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo Credit: Lee Thompson

Along one wall of the studio, adjacent to the domestic space, hangs a series of identical linen resort shirts that showcase an all-over screen-printed pattern of martini glasses and their accompanying green olives. Together, through the familiar marks of a paper-wrapped hanger and impervious plastic sheath, they parade the banal maintenance of a collective trip to the dry cleaner—a reasonable allusion, given the fact that, upon closer observation, each shirt has been stained to the point of no return (as noted in a number of apologetic dry cleaner tags garnishing the front of each garment) by the seemingly reckless consumption of red wine and other less identifiable but equally gluttonous victuals. The martini shirts, the patterns of which are based on Marcus's own proportions, archive personal desire, fully acted upon to the point of becoming physically inerasable.

For Marcus, to exhibit publicly is merely to relocate isolated acts of desire from their private context. The stained shirts will soon have to depart from the security of the neighboring closet. Yet the door, previously separating the personal (domestic space) and the soon-to-be public (studio space), continues to offer a mental partition in the context of the gallery. To approach the interior-facing side of the door, visitors would have to bypass the exhibition and walk a long corridor leading to the gallery offices. By the end of it, positioned next to the restrooms, one would have found the other side of the door, with its coat of paint, effectively visible through the glass on the exterior-facing side (and the gallery side), still attempting to maintain a sense of privacy. ☺

“TO EXHIBIT PUBLICLY IS
TO RELOCATE ISOLATED ACTS
OF DESIRE FROM THEIR
PRIVATE CONTEXT”

SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL

The devil lurks in the details, which might even be the jarring anthropomorphic suggestions of a plucked chicken. For Calvin Marcus, the devil is simply a device of introspection, a distortion of perspective, or a disturbance needed to get off the beaten track.

Calvin Marcus (b. 1988 in San Francisco) is a young artist living and working in Los Angeles. For his first New York exhibition, at Clearing in early 2015, he presented a series of nine paintings that took an ironic look at the self-reflective, often narcissistic nature of art-making. These identical green monochromatic paintings, all titled *Green Calvin*, presented at the center of their surface a number of ceramic chickens with humanoid features—eyes, nose and a mouth. The works could be thought of as a series of cynical self-portraits. Calvin's recent solo shows include "43° 42' 46.4148" N, 79° 20' 30.5988" W" at Public Fiction, Los Angeles and "So Cal" at Chin's Push, Los Angeles. Group exhibitions in 2015: "Le Musée Imaginaire," Lefebvre & Fils, Paris; "Works on Paper," Greene Naftali, New York.

Calvin Marcus

MICHAEL DARLING One of the things that strikes me about your work is that I think from an outsider perspective people might see a certain kind of schizophrenic quality to it. One body of work on the surface seems quite different from the next body of work. Could you talk a little about that as a strategy and if there were other artists who have helped you arrive at that way of working?

CALVIN MARCUS

I think the ways that I formally approach certain ideas tend to include a different material problem or situation every time I develop a body of work. I worked for Laura Owens for a few years and was really excited about her ability to not stay still. It made me realize the power in not feeling like you have to do anything every single time or cultivate an audience for something that people are expecting you to do.

MD

Is that a kind of rebelliousness or an unwillingness to be pinned down, or do you actually see it as a longer term approach to keeping your practice alive and keeping things interesting and evolving for you?

CM

The latter, absolutely. I think it's a way of keeping myself invigorated. Every single time I

have to learn how to do something. I don't want to become a master of anything.

MD

There is a certain project-based approach that you have that reminds me of the way your UCLA teachers, Charles Ray or James Welling, work. They'll have a new problem at hand and they'll go to extensive lengths to accomplish that task. Does that hold any kind of water for you, learning from artists like that?

CM

Those two examples are really good because both of those artists are interested in things that take an immense amount of time and research to do, even when there's some other way that you could get to a finished artwork much more quickly. It's about the journey to carry something out.

MD

In a recent body of paintings that you showed me, you described the lengths you went to in order to have oil stick paints specially fabricated to match the viscosity and color of Crayola crayons. I was fascinated by the single-mindedness of that. How much of that is important to a viewer looking at the work?

CM

I think it's exciting to talk about

Darling, Michael, "Sympathy for the Devil," *Mousse Magazine*, #50, Issue 9, October 2015, p. 166-171



Darling, Michael, "Sympathy for the Devil," *Mousse Magazine*, #50, Issue 9, October 2015, p. 166-171

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NICE TO MEET YOU

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Structure with Six Green Calvins, 2014. Courtesy: C L E A R I N G, New York/Brussels

Previous page - *me with tongue*, 2015.

Courtesy: C L E A R I N G, New York/Brussels and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: Marten Elder

Darling, Michael, "Sympathy for the Devil," *Mousse Magazine*, #50, Issue 9, October 2015, p. 166-171

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SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL
M. DARLING



"Green Calvin" installation view at CLEARING, New York, 2015.
Courtesy: CLEARING, New York/Brussels



Calvin Marcus' studio.
Photo: Michael Darling



Green Calvin (detail) 2014.
Courtesy: CLEARING, New York/Brussels

the process in the context of the studio, but I'm not so sure that the efforts invested in having those things produced are important in the understanding of the work. **MD**

It seems that there is a tangible strangeness about these new paintings that feel like they might be from another time or feel unusual being rendered into this large scale. I think you have found this strange in-between space and that maybe this is the payoff for all the behind the scenes work you put into them. **CM**

Yes, I can't tell if they actually look old or if they just evoke a strangeness from their uncanny material repertoire. There are things I put great effort into, like making the canvas look like a certain type of paper, which is really just some paper I found in a sketchbook. **MD**

I sometimes question whether the quest for novelty is superficial or if the job of the contemporary artist is to show us something new. It seems like with these different procedures and processes you're also trying to find new and uncharted territory. **CM**

I feel like my job is to be searching for something that changes the way I look at other things. I think a lot of the processes that I engage with, like oil painting, are about as old as they could possibly be, but there's still a way to make them unique, like inserting yourself into it and shifting it into something only slightly different. **MD**

Do you think that disruption is a useful word to describe what you're doing? **CM**

Yes. One of the things that really excited me about the paintings I showed at C L E A R I N G, besides the fact that they were being used as green projection spaces, was that they were also large-scale green monochromes. People always tell you that green paintings are the worst. **MD**

For sales? **CM**
For sales. But also color-wise, they came from this idea of synthetic color—it's not a landscape painting color, it's actually this very synthetic green, which is also like a green screen. It really produced this weird, empty projection space. The true function of a green screen is exactly that: digital image replacement. **MD**

And in LA it seems like that's a very fitting ground zero to be working with. **CM**

Yeah, near the film industry. The way the green paintings came about was initially an interest in the tradition of devil masks. I noticed that throughout many cultures the motif shared certain conventions such as the pointy horns and goatee. But when I looked at the way the devil is portrayed in contemporary culture I noticed that he/she is never really a third party; the devil is usually just yourself dressed up on one shoulder and yourself again as an angel on the other, giving advice. This seemed like proof to me that the devil is not a monster; it's a warp of your own perspective and a distrust of yourself. The devil to me became a kind of introspection, where one goes inside and indulges. I was looking at the body of a plucked chicken and realized that when the legs were pointed up, it sort of resembled the horns of one of the devil masks that had inspired me. So I sculpted my own portrait within the body of a chicken (in clay), which grasped that visual disruption or warping, that to me was devilish. **MD**

So they are kind of, in your mind, self-portraits in a way? **CM**

Definitely. And to think about the chicken faces in terms of disruption, having a composition with something directly in the center is a no-no. So I guess that would be one example where I was intentionally disruptive, which is not so much about a "fuck you" as it is about my own sense of humor. **MD**

Like investigating why these sorts of rules have been passed down and testing them? **CM**

Yes. I also wanted to create some type of confrontation where you're arresting a viewer, creating an experience where the space in-between the paintings and the energy in the room is activated through insistent seriality and really intense color.

MD

I think that leads to another question on your interest in seriality. It seems to me that your paintings test viewers and their capabilities of studying the differences from one thing to the next. There is a structure that connects them all but there are all of these variations in-between. Is that what you're after, fine-tuning people's sense of scrutiny? **CM**

It's that and it's also this desire to take over a venue and have it be redundant, imprinting this memory that you can't really evade. There's something about repetition that lasts. It's much harder to forget something when you have to see it ten times. In terms of fine-tuning, it's asking the viewer to look at variation in a different way; all the compositions are the same, centered; each portrait holds a different expression. **MD**

Could it also be a way of maintaining a certain rigor in your practice? **CM**

Yes. There's also a boredom that can be produced from doing the same thing over and over again. It's certainly a way to launch you into something else, which I think is really important. **MD**

So do you usually stop when you feel like you've exhausted the possibilities of a project? **CM**

I do stop and move on to other things or at least start other things while that is still happening. It's not to say that the ideas are boring to me, because sometimes I'll look at a green painting that has hung in my studio for a year and I'm still excited when I look at it. **MD**

It seems like you don't shy away from challenges that then give you a structure or an arena around which to work. I think one area where I really saw this was in these new paintings you're making for your upcoming exhibition at David Kordansky Gallery. Can you talk a little bit about the multidirectional nature of those paintings and how they were made? **CM**

The paintings are four by eight foot, off-white expanses made on portrait linen. The drawings on them are all done with a black crayon. Even though they're on canvas I want them to read as drawings. I work on them either flat on the ground or on a tabletop. And since I walk around the canvases and add to them in a circular fashion the paintings can be hung vertically and horizontally and upside-down. **MD**

One thing I noticed is a real variety of different types of imagery and mark making from detailed and illusionistic to flat and even crude. Are you intentionally trying to engineer a certain variety into each work? **CM**

I work on them in stages. I'll make marks on one canvas and then cross-pollinate that drawing onto different canvases in an effort to make the entire room feel like one big drawing. Certain things sometimes end up on five different canvases. Some days I'll draw in perfect perspective and other days I'll make drawings that are really flat and cartoony. **MD**

Would it be too grandiose to say that in each of those you're trying not to be limited to one language but to open up many possibilities for yourself and maybe even for the viewer? **CM**

I make an effort to have the paintings be as generative and open as possible. I think the way the canvases are prepared and the way that I'm moving circularly around them attempts to depict an interior brain space where there isn't gravity but ideas and thoughts that are colliding and moving. There are certainly things that don't line up. **MD**

And that's fine with you? **CM**

Yes, because there isn't one way to read the works, and there is some kind of desire in these works to not be pinned down to something narrative. It's really about having the painting be this influx thing that finds a sort of power in being open, with moving parts, but at the same time is finished and precise.

by Michael Darling

Darling, Michael, "Sympathy for the Devil," *Mousse Magazine*, #50, Issue 9, October 2015, p. 166-171



me with tongue, 2015.
Courtesy: C L E A R I N G, New York/Brussels and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: Marten Elder

Jovanovic, Rozalia, "See the Top Ten Booths at Frieze New York 2015," *artnet.com*, May 16, 2015

artnet[®]

See the Top Ten Booths at Frieze New York 2015

Rozalia Jovanovic
Saturday, May 16, 2015



Works on paper by Calvin Marcus.
Photo: Courtesy of CLEARING.

6. Clearing, Brooklyn and Brussels

At Clearing, a gallery based in Brooklyn and Brussels (see *Forget Chelsea—The 15 Brooklyn Art Galleries You Need to Know Now*), roughly 40 small colorful works on paper by Calvin Marcus are hung in a single line at eye level. Each work in the series, which collectively is called "Military Man With Tongue Out" (2014-2015), portrays a soldier in a grotesque and somewhat comedic manner at some stage of death or distress. The works, partly because of their materials—they're made with crayon and sharpie—evoke both childrens' drawings and ancient prints of Japanese samurai.

Ebony, David, "Calvin Marcus," *ArtNews.com*, February 2015

ARTnews

Calvin Marcus

February 2015

David Ebony

For this exhibition *Green Calvin* Calvin Marcus, a young, Los Angeles–based artist of promise, filled this spacious Bushwick gallery with 10 recent monochrome green paintings, uniform in size (about 48 by 96 inches), with a teeth-gnashing shade of green-painted surfaces, and a ceramic plucked chicken attached near the center of each canvas. The only relief to this insistent image is a fake door installed in a rear gallery. Is this show a jokey pun on Minimalist painting, the entire enterprise of art-making, or an exercise in sober introspection? It's hard to tell, and the head-jamming ambiguity of the work seems to be the point.

Marking his New York solo debut with this riveting show, Marcus challenges viewers to find some sort of stable ground with which to make sense of his seemingly crazy endeavor. On close inspection, each of the chickens sports humanoid features — eyes, nose and a mouth — on its breast, which ostensibly constitute a self-portrait. It is true that each work suggests a different mood — a smile, a frown, laughing or thoughtful introspection, if that's not going too far. In any case, this is a provocative show that won't be forgotten any time soon.

Thomson, Allese, "Calvin Marcus," *Artforum.com*, January 2015

ARTFORUM

Calvin Marcus

01.23.15

ALLESE THOMSON

In 1684, a hall of mirrors was erected in Versailles as an immersive stage that would send countless reflections of a single expression into the world. If today the screen fulfills the function of the mirror, we're left with a troubling question: Is the digital image more complete than a reflection? It's an anxious proposition and one occupying Calvin Marcus, though the Los Angeles-based artist doesn't make digital images. He favors clay and sticks of oil, tempered hardboard and corrugated cardboard, creating small sculptures—a sleeping ceramic shark, a crib-like wooden cage, doll-sized houses lit with purple LEDs—unique worlds brimming with angst and desire, works that deal in the poetics of nostalgia and repression.

For his New York debut, he presents one series, *Green Calvin*, 2014, which consists of ten monochrome green paintings, each with a ceramic green chicken fixed to its center. The color evokes a greenroom—the space where actors wait before performing—which spotlights our current liberty to put our lives on camera, to personally sculpt public identity. The clay, pulled and pushed to create a cadaver of a plucked fowl, looks soft and creepy. Marcus has carved out a face, his own, in the center, and each expression is very different, as if he has caught and sculpted various reflections. It's all a bit nightmarish—finding one's visage in raw flesh, being forced to pace in an infinity of selves—evoking the delirious level of upkeep our digital bodies require, the burden of manipulating reflection into image.

At the back of the gallery, there is one departure from Marcus's labyrinth of green souls: a door that has been installed in the wall. It does not open. A broken clock has been adhered over its glass window—it's the only image in the show.

캘빈 마커스 CALVIN MARCUS

1988 년 샌프란시스코 출생 born 1988, San Francisco, CA
로스앤젤레스 거주 및 활동 lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

학력 EDUCATION

2015 MFA, University of California, Los Angeles, CA
2010 BFA, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

주요 개인 및 2인전 SELECTED SOLO / TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 *HER*, Clearing, Beverly Hills, CA
EVERYTHING GOING THROUGH ITSELF, Clearing, Brussels, Belgium
- 2019 *GO HANG A SALAMI IM A LASAGNA HOG*, David Kordansky Gallery,
Los Angeles, CA
Calvin Marcus: Structure Series, K11 MUSEA, Hong Kong
- 2018 *New Works by Calvin Marcus*, Clearing, New York, NY
Hannah Greely / Calvin Marcus, curated by Drew Heitzler, / , San
Francisco, CA
- 2017 *Harold Ancart and Calvin Marcus*, Karma, Amagansett, NY
**the inner is the outer of the other*, The Power Station, Dallas, TX
- 2016 **Were Good Men*, Clearing, New York, NY
Malvin Carcus, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
*M*A*S*H*, with Chadwick Rantanen, Clearing, Brussels, Belgium
- 2015 *Green Calvin*, Clearing, New York, NY
Calvin Marcus at Peep-Hole, curated by Vincenzo de Bellis and Bruna
Roccasalva, Peep-Hole, Milan, Italy
- 2014 *So Cal*, Chin's Push, Los Angeles, CA
43° 42' 46.4148" N, 79° 20' 30.5988" W, Public Fiction, Los Angeles, CA

주요 단체전 SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *Nothing is to be Done for William T. Wiley*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2021 *Brian Calvin Marcus Jahmal*, curated by Chris Martin, WINDOW, Anton Kern Gallery, New York, NY
Grand Ménage, Clearing, Paris, France
New Works in the Collection – From Abramovic to Warhol, Louisiana Museum of Art, Humlebæk, Denmark
- 2020 *Sculpture from a Distance, Part I*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Junque, curated by Jamian Juliano-Villani, Massimo De Carlo, London, England
Just Connect, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, IL
The Secret Life of Lobsters, Cwart, Knokke-Heist, Belgium
Life Still, Clearing, Brooklyn, NY
- 2019 **Whitney Biennial 2019*, curated by Rujeko Hockley and Jane Panetta, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
How it looks to be you in Egyptian Cotton, 214 Projects, Dallas, TX
Private Passion – New Acquisitions in the Astrup Fearnley Collection, curated by Gunnar B. Kvaran, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway
L'Âge de Raison, Clearing, Brussels, Belgium
Good Moves, organized by The Power Station, in collaboration with James Cope of And Now Gallery, The Power Station, Dallas, TX
Dog Days, Clearing, Brooklyn, NY
- 2018 *Keep Me Warm*, Clearing, Brooklyn, NY
- 2017 **The Trick Brain*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Aïshti Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon
Mixed Bag: Drawings, curated by Joe Bradley and Jeremy Willis, Real Estate, Brooklyn, NY
Inaugural Exhibition, Syz Collection, Geneva, Switzerland
Fall is Cancelled, Gladstone 64, New York, NY
Nut Art, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Hot Mess, Karma International, Beverly Hills, CA
The Garden of Forking Paths, organized by Adam Marnie, Magenta Plains, New York, NY

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

43 E. 78th Street, Clearing, New York, NY

- 2016 *High Anxiety: New Acquisitions*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL
Fritto Misto, Clearing, New York, NY
Olympia, curated by Karma, Galerie Patrick Seguin, rue des Taillandiers, Paris, France
Fields of War, Massimo de Carlo, London, England
Paper Paper, organized by Calvin Marcus and Donald Morgan, Ditch Projects, Springfield, OR; The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
Teen Choice, organized by Drew Heitzler, C. Nichols Project, Mar Vista, CA, July 31 – August 27, 2016
PLEASE HAVE ENOUGH ACID IN THIS DISH!, organized by Vinny Dotolo, M+B, Los Angeles, CA
Inside Out, curated by Alexandra Economou, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2015 *Tickles*, organized by Michael Dopp and Isaac Resnikoff, 356 S. Mission Rd., Los Angeles, CA
Tightrope Walk: Painted Images After Abstraction, organized by Barry Schwabsy, White Cube, London, England
Jeff, Grice Bench, Los Angeles, CA
Works on Paper, Greene Naftali, New York, NY
Le Musée Imaginaire, Lefebvre & Fils, Paris, France

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Los Angeles 로스앤젤레스

Anthony Pearson 앤서니 피어슨
Casements
July 23 – August 27, 2022
2022년 7월 23일 – 8월 27일

Ivan Morley 아이반 몰리
July 23 – August 27, 2022
2022년 7월 23일 – 8월 27일

The Racial Imaginary Institute
더 레이셜 이미지네리 인스티튜트
All Opposing Players
July 23 – August 27, 2022
2022년 7월 23일 – 8월 27일

New York 뉴욕

Lucy Bull 루시 불
Piper
September 10 – October 15, 2022
2022년 9월 10일 – 10월 15일

Online 온라인

Huma Bhabha 후마 바바
Fundación Casa Wabi
April 1 – December 31, 2022
2022년 4월 1일 – 12월 31일

Fairs 아트페어

Seoul Pop-Up Exhibition
서울 팝업 전시
August 18 – September 5, 2022
2022년 8월 18일 – 9월 5일

Frieze Seoul 프리즈 서울
Calvin Marcus 캘빈 마커스
September 2 – 5, 2022
2022년 9월 2일 – 5일