



Nina Johnson

Derek Fordjour: Ritual

March 16 - April 28, 2018

MIAMI—Nina Johnson is proud to present *Ritual*, a show of new paintings by New York-based artist Derek Fordjour, opening on March 16 with a public reception and remaining on view until April 28. These vividly patterned works reveal figures caught between states of revelry and solemnity. Fordjour explores different aspects of rituals: representation, preparation, performance, and preservation. The paintings examine how social dynamics solidify into hierarchies and teams, exploring visual codes used throughout history to perpetuate, and challenge, social order.

Fordjour's paintings are built up through the accumulation of newspaper, bits of paper, and an underlayer of hand-cut cardboard tiles. The surfaces are thickly colored with oil and acrylic as well as lush applications of oil pastel. His palette is either muted, with dark, muddied earth tones, or bursting with color. The resulting visual effect is fractured in a way that evokes a parade ground littered with confetti bits, the day after the fervor and festivities have passed. These canvases' slightly derelict feel harkens back to childhood in Memphis, a city blighted by poverty and racial strife, wherein the effects of white flight marked many of the buildings he occupied with the ruinous effects of previous ownership. Fordjour, born to immigrant parents from Ghana, also recalls sending old clothing home to relatives in Africa. The buildings of his youth and the old clothing sent to Ghana would both be made new again through a prideful investment of meager means, giving them new life. Likewise, his paintings rise triumphantly above their tatters—excavating joy, making the most out of very little, a condition Fordjour asserts is central in black and brown communities.

Ritual features a selection of Fordjour's *Players*, a portrait series he has expanded over the years. These small portraits of men of color are titled by number. Designed to mimic aesthetics and dimensions of trading cards or headshots, the *Players* paintings move through the market, revealing through the fluctuations of value and desire the vulnerability of black and brown bodies. Similarly, a painting like "*Couplet 35*," is a diptych composed of two separate but related panels. Fordjour's *Couplets*, an extension of the *Players* series, invite comparison and contrast through a game of looking and "profiling." The conceptual premise in the work rests on the notion that recalling detail from the left panel could very well become confused like the right and vice versa. Historically and contemporaneously, such acts of recall, profiling and mistaken identity have fatal implications for many people of color.

Beyond their purposefully weathered materials, these paintings have a strong connection to both social and art history. The portraiture of John Singer Sargent and Robert Henri finds its way in, as does the tumultuous brio of James Ensor. The blocks of color nod toward Jacob Lawrence, while that movement-in-time line work channels Degas' sketches of dancers. The emptiness of Hopper, the expanses of Hart Benton, the textural zeitgeist of Wayne Thiebaud: the references combine and split to create something unique. Take the patterning, the repeated diamonds Fordjour places throughout his work. There is the reference to Picasso's forlorn Harlequins, but they also refer to the sordid, forgotten history of black jockeys in this country—a privileged class of African Americans midstep between social strata. And then, of course, the patterns represent the notion of patterning itself—taking something and repeating it over and over again, be it a painted shape, a longstanding tradition, a ritual. Commonly defined as a set of actions performed according to a prescribed order, Fordjour interrogates this notion of ritual through the act of tearing down and building up over time and through layers in hopes of revealing inherent truth.

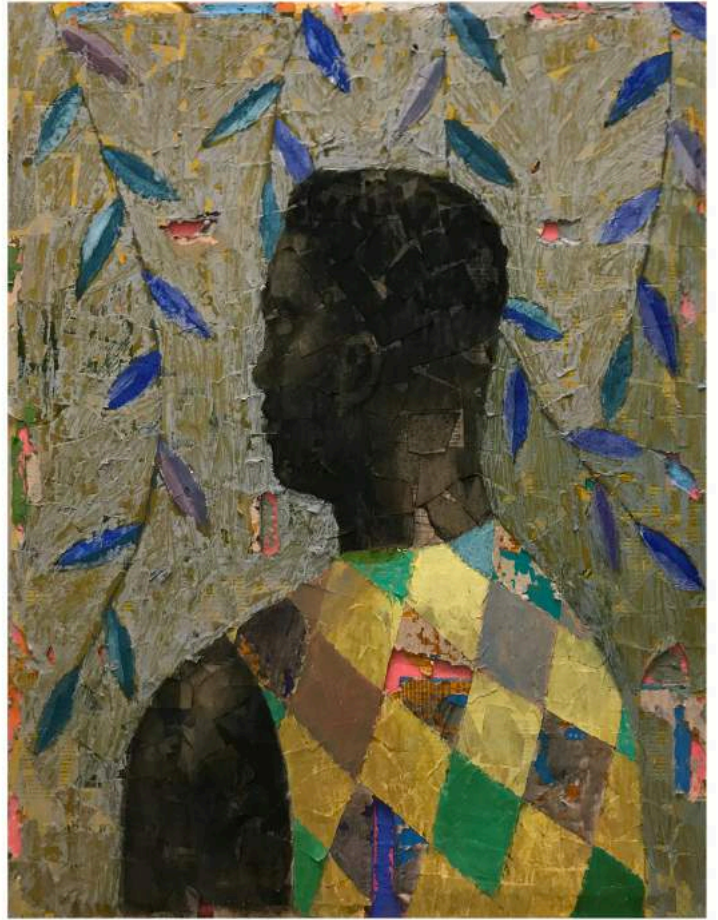
About Derek Fordjour

Derek Fordjour was born in Memphis, Tennessee to parents of Ghanaian heritage. His work has been exhibited in numerous venues including Sotheby's S2 Gallery in New York City, Roberts & Tilton Gallery in Los Angeles, and Galleria Monica DeCardenas in Switzerland. He was awarded 2016 Sugarhill Museum Artist-in-Residence, 2017 C12 Emerging Artist Award and the 2017 Sharpe Walentas Studio Program in New York City. He is a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta Georgia, earned a Master's Degree in Art Education from Harvard University and an MFA in painting at Hunter College. His work has been reviewed in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Hyperallergic and Brooklyn Rail. He has also been featured in several publications such as Forbes Magazine, ESPN's The Undefeated and VICE Creators. He frequently serves as a Visiting Critic and Lecturer, most recently at Yale University School of Art and The Cooper Union. His work also appears in several collections throughout the US and Europe including JP Morgan Chase collection and Dallas Museum of Art.

About Nina Johnson

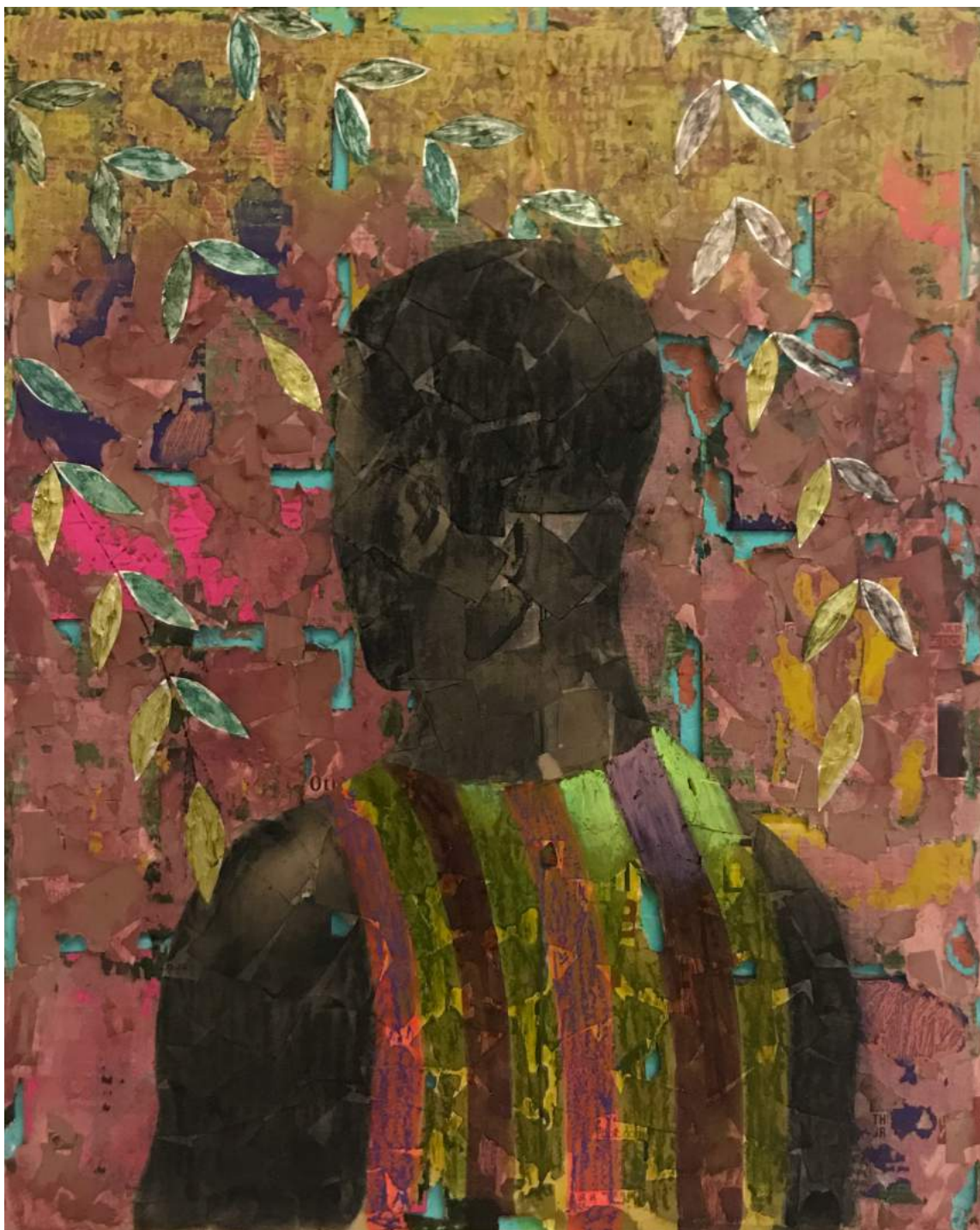
Nina Johnson is a contemporary art space in Miami, Florida. Since 2007, the gallery has produced exhibitions by emerging and established artists from around the world. The gallery works alongside artists to produce ambitious projects both within the confines of the gallery space and beyond.

Nina Johnson



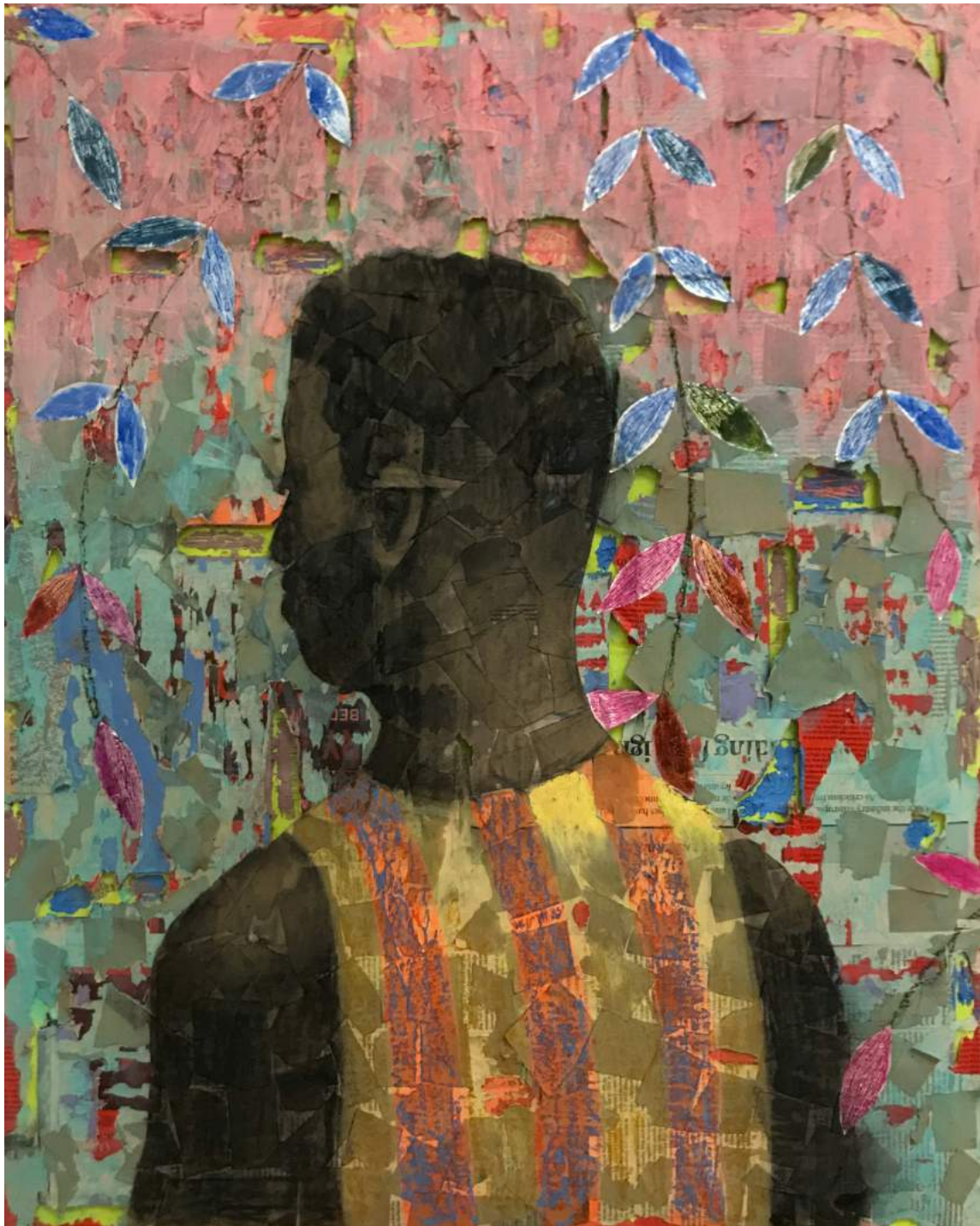
Couplet 35
2018
Oil pastel, charcoal, acrylic, cardboard and carved newspaper mounted on canvas
24 x 30 in. each
\$17,500

Nina Johnson



No. 34
2018
Oil pastel, charcoal, acrylic, foil and newspaper mounted on canvas
30 x 24 in.
\$10,000

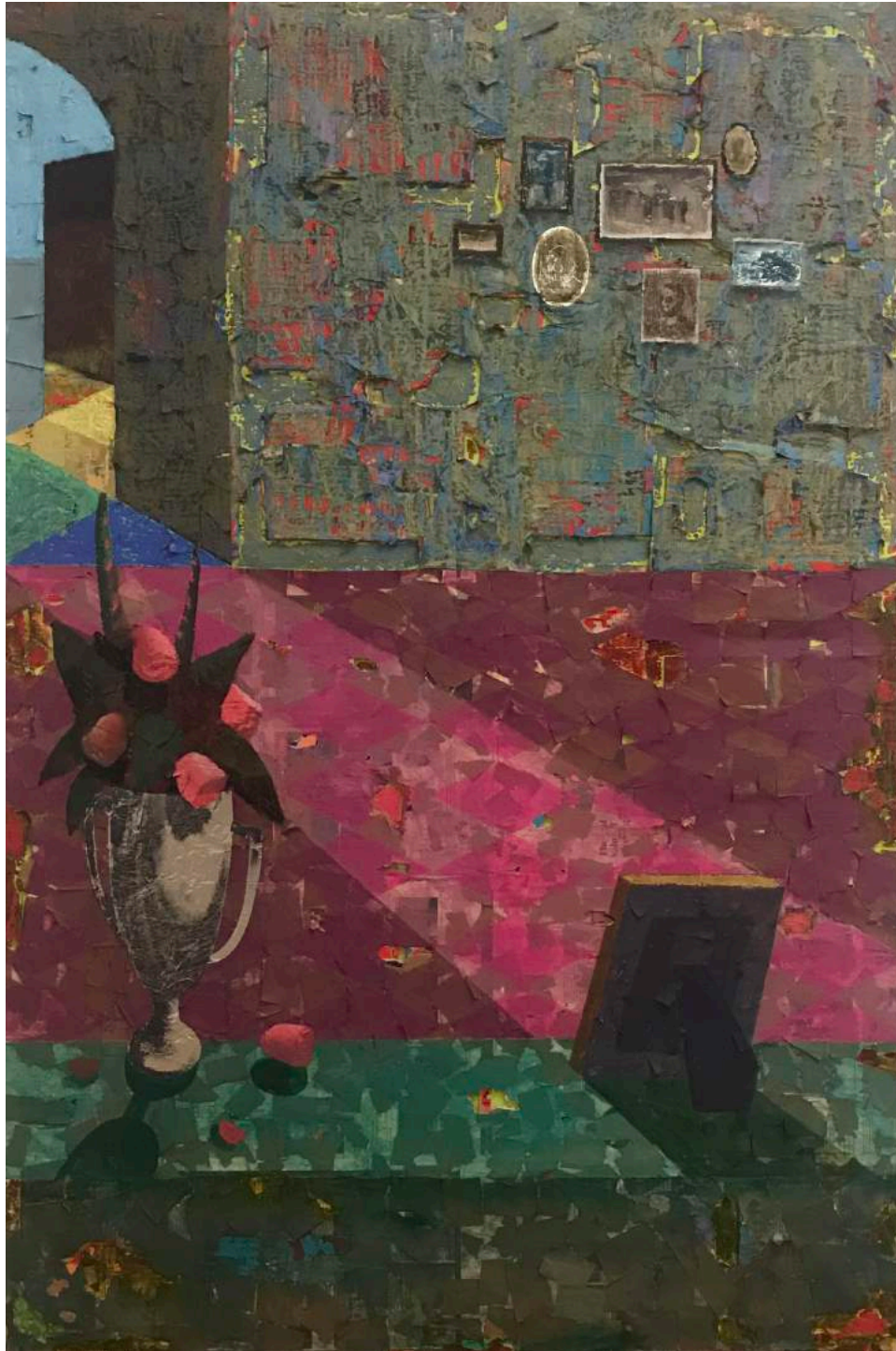
Nina Johnson



No. 81
2018
Oil pastel, charcoal, acrylic, foil and newspaper mounted on canvas
30 x 24 in.
\$10,000

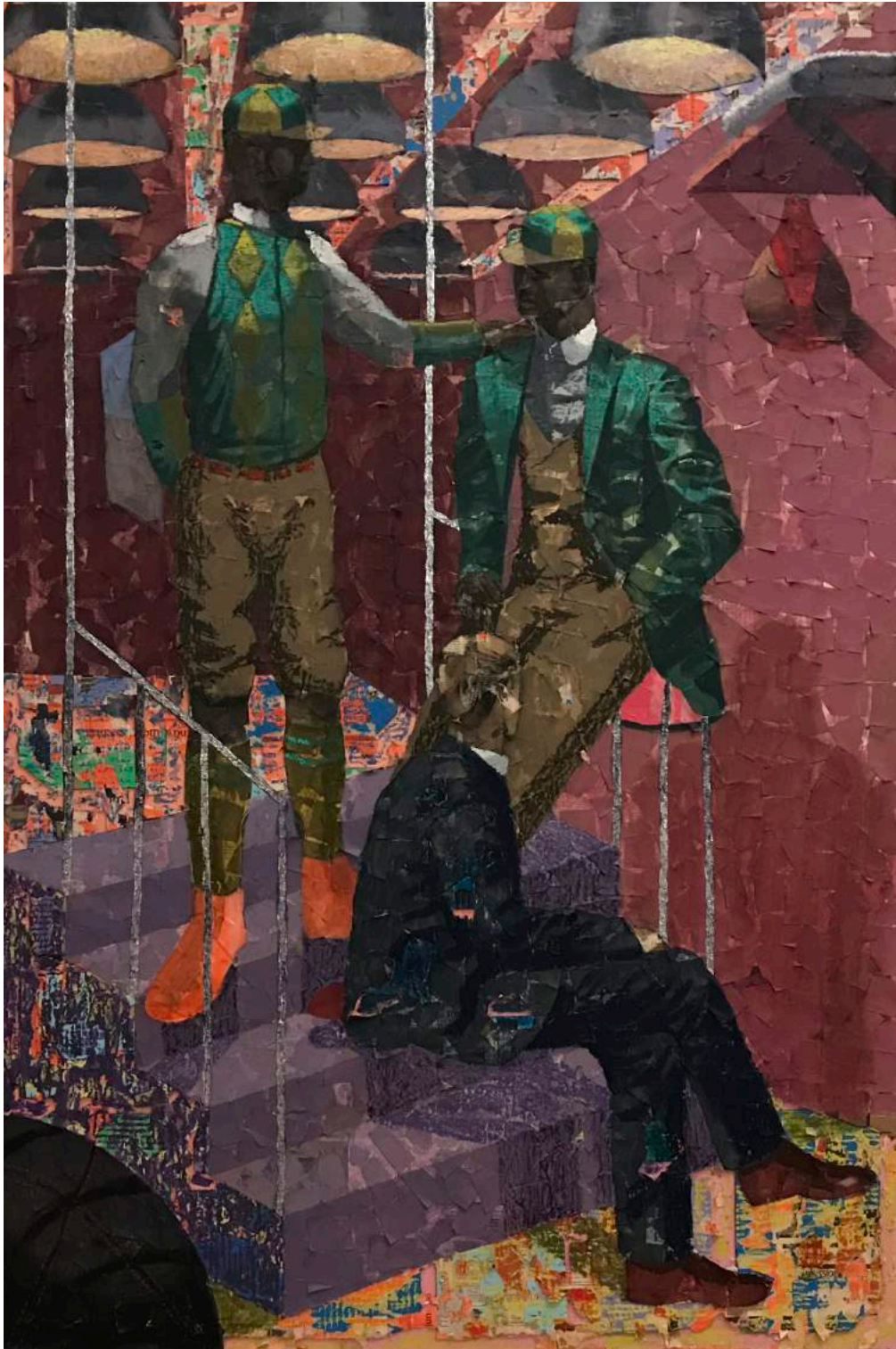


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Untitled
2018
Oil pastel, charcoal, acrylic, foil and newspaper mounted on canvas
60 x 40 in.
\$18,000

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Protective Covenants & Restrictions

2018

Oil pastel, charcoal, acrylic, foil and newspaper mounted on canvas

72 x 48 in.

\$20,000



Nina Johnson



No. 93
2018
Oil pastel, charcoal, acrylic and newspaper mounted on canvas
30 x 24 in.
\$10,000

Nina Johnson



Five Rattlers Wide

2018

Oil pastel, charcoal, acrylic and newspaper mounted on canvas

48 x 90 in.

\$24,000

DEREK FORDJOUR

Lives and works in New York City

MFA, Hunter College, New York, NY, 2016

Ed.M., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 2002

BA, Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA, 2001

Pratt Institute College of Art and Design, 2001

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 Ritual, Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami, FL
Zona Maco, Mexico City, MX
- 2017 PARADE, Sugar Hill Museum, New York, NY
- 2016 Agency & Regulation, LUCE Gallery, Turin, Italy
Derek Fordjour : Eight Paintings, Papillion Art, Los Angeles, CA
- 2015 UPPER ROOM, Robert Blumenthal Gallery, New York, NY
Meritocracy, Jack Bell Gallery, London, UK
- 2014 The BIG GAME, Storefront Ten Eyck Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2013 Sciame Artist's Salon Series Exhibition, Sciame Corporate Gallery, New York, NY
Built Environments: Inaugurations with Felandus Thames, Columbia University
Russ Barrie Pavillion, New York, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2018 [upcoming] Sideline, Galerie Lelong, New York, NY
- 2017 Galleria Monica de Cardenas, Lugano, Switzerland
Diamonds, Rings and Courts, Geoffrey Yeh Art Gallery at St. John's University, NY
All That Glitters, Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York, NY
Selections, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York, NY
- 2016 Human Condition, The former L.A. Metropolitan Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA
The Barn Show, Johannes Vogt Gallery East, East Hampton, NY
First We Take Manhattan, Ethan Cohen Gallery, New York, NY
Island States, Tops Gallery, Memphis, TN
March Madness, Fort Gansevoort, New York, NY
- 2015 I Like it Like This, Sothebys S2 Gallery, New York, NY
And There is an End, Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Mixed Doubles, Sometimes Gallery, New York, NY
No Such Place, Edward Tyler Nahem Gallery, New York, NY
- 2014 OPEN, Papillion Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2013 Corpus Americus, Driscoll Babcock Gallery, New York, NY
Ticknihova and Winter, New York, NY
Atlanta University Center Alumni Exhibition, Atlanta University Center, Atlanta, GA

RESIDENCIES AND AWARDS

- 2017 Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program, Brooklyn, NY
C-12 Emerging Artist Award, Hunter College, New York, NY
- 2016 Artist-in-Residence, Sugar Hill Museum, New York, NY

VISITING ARTIST/LECTURES

- 2017 Yale University MFA, Visiting Critic, New Haven, NY
Rhode Island School of Design BFA, Visiting Critic, Providence, RI
SUNY Purchase College, Visiting Critic, White Plains, NY
Hunter College, Hunter Mellon Arts Fellowship Workshop Panel, New York, NY
FIT, ARTSpeak Panel Discussion, New York, NY
- 2016 School of Visual Arts MFA, Visiting Critic, New York, NY

SELECTED PRESS AND REVIEWS

- 2017 The Undefeated, "The Portrait of an Artist...", Kelley D. Evans, Oct. 6, 2017
Galerie Magazine, "Derek Fordjour's Immersive...", Jacqueline Terrebombe, Aug. 2, 2017
Forbes, "The Jay-Z of the Art World Discusses His...", Brienne Walsh, Jul. 16, 2017
Vice, "Sports Are a metaphore for Inequality...", Francesca Caposella, Jun. 21, 2017
- 2016 La Stampa, "L'artista che rappa con i colori...", Giulia Zonca, Oct. 12, 2016
Art Critical, "Armory Pick of the Day: Derek Fordjour...", David Cohen, Mar. 3, 2016
LA Times, "And There is an End..", David Pagel, Mar. 21, 2016
LA Times, "Derek Fordjour: Eight Paintings..", Carolina Miranda, Feb. 4, 2016
- 2015 New York Times, "From Derek Fordjour...", Holland Cotter, Nov. 19, 2015
- 2014 The Brooklyn Rail, Review of 'The Big Game', Johnathan Goodman, Oct. 7, 2014
Ebony, "Artist Derek Fordjour has a Lesson for...", by Souleo, Sep. 29, 2014
Huffington Post, "The Sports World Could Learn...", by Souleo, Sep. 27, 2014
MSNBC's Thegrio.com, "40 Amazing Black Artists to Watch in 2014", Jan. 3, 2014

COLLECTIONS

- Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas
JP Morgan Chase Collection, New York
Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, Palm Beach
Ernesto Esposito Collection, Naples
Craig Hall, Hall Group, Dallas