

Petzel

DEREK FORDJOUR *SCORE*

Featuring *Arena*, an ensemble movement piece, with two performances daily

November 10 – December 22, 2023
520 West 25th Street

Petzel is pleased to present *SCORE*, an interdisciplinary exhibition of new works by New York-based artist Derek Fordjour. The show marks Fordjour's second exhibition with the gallery and will be on view from November 10th to December 22nd, 2023, at Petzel's Chelsea location at 520 West 25th Street.

SCORE, the multivalent title of Derek Fordjour's sprawling new three-room exhibition, encapsulates several layers of meaning: to cut and scrape—a reference to his distinctive process of excavation in painting; to gain points in a competitive contest, a constant allegory in Fordjour's work; and to compose as he has in collaboration to create a choreographic performance. Furthermore, the content of his newest works mines his lived experience to build a painterly score of seminal moments, exploring the zeitgeist of his formative years and grappling with a host of sense memories in his most personal body of work yet.

Spanning the entire ground floor of Petzel Gallery's Chelsea outpost, this exhibition typifies the artist's continued practice of presenting various modes of representation, medium, format and display. Fordjour's *SCORE* combines a suite of new paintings and sculpture by the artist (South Gallery) with a multilevel, indoor architectural installation (East Gallery) and custom-built performance space (West Gallery).

The South Gallery presents the latest of Fordjour's signature two-dimensional works, displayed within the traditional white cube, paired with a new, monumental floor sculpture, *Flock*. Blending the two and three-dimensional, the static and the mobile, *SCORE* incorporates familiar artistic forms with new collaborations that build upon and connect back to Fordjour's established practice. *Flock* presents a collection of upturned legs and wheels clustered in a tight gaggle, speaking directly to Fordjour's enduring interest in questioning agency and autonomy in the face of stagnant conditions, social or otherwise. Through spectacle and peculiar arrangement, *Flock* evokes a profound tension, echoing many of the smaller sculptural propositions displayed in *Wunderkammer*, a site-specific installation in the East Gallery.

Exemplifying the multitude of ways inequities are systematically sustained and supported within traditional art museums and galleries, Fordjour's multilevel East Gallery installation is the heart of the exhibition. Upon entering *Wunderkammer*, visitors ascend the stairs of an architectural structure to encounter a series of corridors lined with a series of wall insets, displaying Fordjour's sculptures as a "cabinet of curiosities." Featuring ambient lighting and carpeting, this space invokes references to the world of luxury retail and high-end presentation. The innermost room is abuzz with two kinetic dioramas circulating on a rotating belt that incorporate miniature murals. Painted in Fordjour's signature style, the murals create a backdrop for sculptural elements engineered to perform synchronized movements.

Petzel

Following the dioramas, visitors descend downstairs into the dank conditions of a basement. Not dissimilar to an artist's studio or a retail warehouse, this environment presents a stark contrast to the upstairs. Largely obscured or hidden from view, the guise of luxury is often inextricably linked to the gross inequities of capitalistic enterprise. Situated far from the limelight of the floor above, in what the artist refers to as a theatrical fragment, two live actors perform pedestrian tasks as laborers powering the dioramas above. By casting the visitor as spectator, witness and audience, Fordjour's *SCORE* offers a peek behind an opulent curtain, animating questions of power and conspicuous consumption.

In *SCORE*, Fordjour debuts his latest collaboration, *Arena*, an original ensemble movement piece, jointly composed with renowned choreographer Sidra Bell, founder of Sidra Bell Dance New York. *Arena* will be performed twice daily in the West Gallery. With live musical accompaniment from Hannah Mayree of The Black Banjo Reclamation Project, five dancers will animate the space, performing the original choreographic score atop a packed dirt floor, within a built environment, which includes a sculptural seating structure and custom tent. Informed directly from the artist's paintings, original costume and lighting design infuse theatricality into the artist's oeuvre. *Arena* grapples with notions of performance and abstraction through live action in a kaleidoscopic exploration of labor, history, power and race.

About Derek Fordjour

Derek Fordjour was born in Memphis, Tennessee to Ghanaian parents. He was awarded 2016 Sugarhill Museum Artist-in-Residence, the 2017 Sharpe Walentas Studio Program in New York City, and named the 2018 Deutsche Bank NYFA Fellowship Award. He was appointed The Alex Katz Chair at Cooper Union and served as a Core Critic at Yale University School of Art. In 2018, he was awarded commissions for the Whitney Museum of American Art Billboard Project and the Metropolitan Transit Authority Arts & Design program. Recently, he was the inaugural artist for the Building Art Series on the façade of MOCA Grand Avenue in Los Angeles. His work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Hyperallergic*. He has also been featured in several publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *Juxtapoz*, *Vanity Fair* and *Forbes Magazine*. 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 from Hunter College. His work is held in the private and public collections of The Studio Museum of Harlem, Guggenheim Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, SFMOMA, Brooklyn Museum, Perez Museum, The Whitney Museum and LACMA. Fordjour is the founder of Contemporary Arts Memphis Summer Fellowship program.

Petzel Gallery is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Ricky Lee at ricky@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.