

KENRICK MCFARLANE
The Junkanoo Meets the Ocean
March 15 – May 11, 2024
Opening: Thursday, March 14, 6-8 pm
11-13, Rue des Arquebusiers, 75003 Paris

Galerie Peter Kilchmann Paris is pleased to present *The Junkanoo Meets the Ocean*, a solo exhibition by American painter Kenrick McFarlane. The artist created twenty-two paintings in various sizes for the exhibition. It is the first time McFarlane's work is shown in Paris, and the artist's first solo show in Europe.

In his most recent works, **Kenrick McFarlane** (b. 1990 in Chicago) primarily focuses on black portraiture. Within these portrait paintings, the complex experience of appropriated cultural and personal identities and the ambiguity of sociocultural constraints are explored. The artist examines this experience and describes this act of conformity as a performance that is often carried out as a way of finding acceptance within a social group or situation.

Additionally, the experience of breaking away from the performance of societal norms and finding self-liberation is also expressed within this exhibition. Some of the paintings depict notable celebrities, musicians, and artists, serving as a symbol of performers, while other works express figures in a state of reflection and self-examination. The experience of questioning one's performance or adopted societal behaviors and desires, and the thought of what lies beyond is an expression McFarlane aimed to capture within these portraits. The works in the exhibition also raise questions about controversial issues such as the perceived status of black and white culture, interracial relationships, and the legacy of the Caribbean slave culture. It examines whether, to members of the black community, the act of performance serves as a liberation from oppressive social constructs or whether it is ultimately tied to their respective expected clichés.

With art-historic references from German Expressionists to British painter Francis Bacon to portraits of controversial rap artists like Haitian-American Kodak Black, McFarlane combines various cultures and aesthetics from different moments in history to create a conversation on performance and liberation. The name Junkanoo is a reference to the Jamaican festival, originally practiced during the trans-Atlantic slave period where enslaved people only had one day of leisure. This festival incorporated masking and mimicking various personalities. The ocean, according to McFarlane, is seen as a symbol of freedom, a being with no ego or desire, one that follows its natural intuition.

This idea of trusting one's intuition is a major part of McFarlane's painting practice. Loose and luscious brushwork weaves throughout the canvases within this exhibition. A combination of planned compositions and spontaneous paint handling is combined with conceptual ideas relating to the experience of performance, ultimately giving birth to beautiful yet enigmatic paintings.

The Junkanoo Meets the Ocean questions whether the performance and the appropriation of a different identity prevent a person from confronting the real self. Entertainers and celebrities are displayed as mere individuals and their potential motivations and ambiguity are laid open. The painting *Instagram Girl*, which appears to feature a person with deep anxiety, is a placeholder for Kenrick's comments on the expected and perceived performances, and their psychological impact of them. Additionally, the painting *Artist in the Studio* alludes to the circumstance that the artist himself is part of an introspection- but certainly of one that has openly embraced the dilemmas of a black performer.

Kenrick McFarlane (b. 1990, Chicago) received his BFA from the School of Art Institute of Chicago and studied in the MFA program at the University of California, Los Angeles. Since 2010 his work has been featured in several group and solo exhibitions in the US, Europe, and South Africa. This includes exhibitions at Galerie Peter Kilchmann Zurich (2022), Samek Art Museum, Bucknell (2018), and Jeffrey Deitch Gallery (2021) solo exhibitions include M+B Gallery, Los Angeles (2021 and 2023,) and Gallery MOMO in Johannesburg (2020). The artist currently lives and works between Mexico City and Los Angeles.

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