

MASSIMODECARLO

JOSH SMITH

I WILL CARRY THE WEIGHT

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to present *I Will Carry The Weight*, an exhibition by Josh Smith, the artist's first London gallery show since 2007.

The American painter Josh Smith, whose practice encompasses prints, drawings, and sculptures, creates works characterised by dramatic brushstrokes, compulsive repetition of subjects, calligraphic lines and the intensity of colour.

In *I Will Carry The Weight*, the title being the artists answer to Gang Starr's song *Who's Gonna Take the Weight?*, Josh Smith presents a series of new, large and small scale, oil canvases depicting variations of the personification of death: the grim reaper. In each canvas the grim reaper is portrayed with the customary black robe and scythe, positioned in surreal and hallucinatory dark landscapes marked by multi-coloured and vibrant brushstrokes.

The artist commenced the series by drawing cartoon sketches, and slowly started to render the sketches in oil. The weightiness of the subject was, for Josh Smith, a gift allowing him to devote more energy to the paintings themselves, giving each painting "enough personality to warrant its existence". The artist assigns to the paintings titles that he felt nebulously amplified his desire for what each work might convey. About the viewer's potential quest for a meaning in the series, Josh Smith states: "There is no meaning except that they mean everything you want them to. I believe any good painting could just as easily mean nothing as it could mean everything. Ideally you look at the paintings and then think about whatever it is that you end up thinking about. That's what happens with me".

The exhibition also includes a group of monotypes, made a few years earlier, portraying the same subject. Josh Smith will usually go into the print shop before he starts to make a new set of paintings and is able to test out everything and see if an idea is worth pursuing. Monotyping produces a unique print, made by drawing or painting on a smooth, non-absorbent surface. The image is then transferred onto a sheet of paper by pressing the two together. In this case, this was done with a printing press. About making the monotypes, Josh Smith says: "I feel as if the monotypes are a type of painting. The process of creating a monotype allows for reaction and reflection as you are creating. In this exhibition you will notice the changes between the monotypes and the paintings."

In both the canvases and the monotypes, Josh Smith creates a series of expressive and colourful *memento mori*. The inevitability of death is depicted not as an evil or sinister fact, but rather as a harmless reality.

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Josh Smith was born in Okinawa in Japan in 1976, and grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee. He lives and works in New York. Josh Smith has had solo exhibitions at prestigious institutions such as the Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, D (2016); MACRO Museum in Rome, IT (2015); Zabłudowicz Collection, London, UK (2013); The Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, USA (2011); Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Geneva, CH (2009); MUMOK, Vienna, A (2008). Group exhibitions include: *Zeitgeist*, MAMCO, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Geneva, CH (2017); *Artistic Toolbox: 1989-2017*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, A (2017); *Schiff Ahoy: Contemporary Art from the Brandhorst Collection*, Museum Brandhorst, Munich, D (2016); *You've Got to Know the Rules...to Break Them*, de la Cruz Collection, Miami, USA (2015); *The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (2014); *The Painting Factory*, MOCA The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA (2012).

Hard Facts:

Massimo De Carlo, London
55 South Audley Street
London W1K 2QH
From January 19th, 2018 until March 24th, 2018
Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00am – 6.00pm
Opening: Thursday 18th of January 2018, 6.00 to 8.00 pm

For further information and materials:

Press Office, Massimo De Carlo
T. +44 (0) 2072872005 - T. +39 02 70003987
press@massimodecarlo.com
www.massimodecarlo.com
Twitter: mdcgallery
Instagram: massimodecarlogallery

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