

EXHIBITION GUIDE

ESTEBAN JEFFERSON

May 25th, 2020

7 October 2023–14 January 2024

In his first institutional solo exhibition, US artist Esteban Jefferson presents new and existing works that critique legacies of colonialism and racism as encoded in public monuments and urban space. Titled *May 25th, 2020*, the date of George Floyd's murder, the exhibition is divided between three galleries. In the darkened metal-lined gallery, works capture moments of intense turmoil from the week following Floyd's death. Two further galleries feature images of the residue and broader effects of the demonstrations in the months that followed. Each work is titled with a date, time-stamped as a testament to a particular moment in time and social ferment.

Jefferson's paintings draw on photographs of sites local to his studio, which he sees transform over time. Combining line drawing with painted details, they replicate the way his attention is caught by the jarring dislocation of official intent vs street level intervention, and peeling layers between the two. The scale of the works references the tradition of history painting where vast canvases enshrine nationalistic narratives and military triumphs. Jefferson inverts this tradition to memorialise and monumentalise the fugitive mark making of the activist and protestor, whose disruption of the normal flow of the city is erased by the passing of time, yet – perhaps optimistically – can contribute to political change.

FIRST FLOOR

1. *June 4, 2023 (Continental Army Plaza, Brooklyn)*
2023

Two channel video (colour)

3:01 minutes

DASKALOPOULOS TANK GALLERY

2. *May 31, 2020, (Soho, Manhattan), 2023*

Oil, graphite and coloured pencil on linen

3. *May 29, 2020 (Union Square, Manhattan), 2023*

Dyptych

Oil paint and graphite on linen

4. *June 7, 2020 (Madison Street, Lower East Side)*
2022

Oil paint and graphite on linen

Three paintings represent moments from the most violent days of the protests. A diptych of a burnt-out police van documents one of many that were left on

the street by the police as a heavy-handed reference to the chaos that ensues in an unpoliced society. A flag hangs in a window on a housing project. Its colours – green, red, and black – are those of the Pan-African movement. Originally an artwork by David Hammons, the flag has since become ubiquitous as a symbol of African American nationhood. Elsewhere, a looted Dior storefront in Soho is boarded up and tagged.

GERTLER GALLERY

5. *January 19, 2022 (American Museum of Natural History, Manhattan), 2022*

Oil paint and graphite on linen

6. *October 6, 2021 (American Museum of Natural History, Manhattan, five days before Indigenous Peoples' Day)*
2023

Oil paint and graphite on linen

7. *June 15, 2021*

2023

Single channel video (colour, sound)

12:36 minutes

8. *March 12, 2023 (American Museum of Natural History, Manhattan), 2023*

Bronze Plaque

Two paintings depict the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial statue, which was positioned outside the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The statue features Roosevelt on horseback, flanked on each side by a Native American and Black man at his feet. The statue was the focus of a sustained campaign of criticism for years, debates around which are articulated in the Landmark Preservation Commission meeting projected in the space, held in 2021 after the decision to move the sculpture. As a result of pressure exerted during the Black Lives Matter protests the sculpture was finally removed, but not destroyed, in January 2022. It will be relocated to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in North Dakota (out of sight, out of mind). An open question lingers as to the way in which discussions of racial inequality are tabled and then closed with real change un-effected.

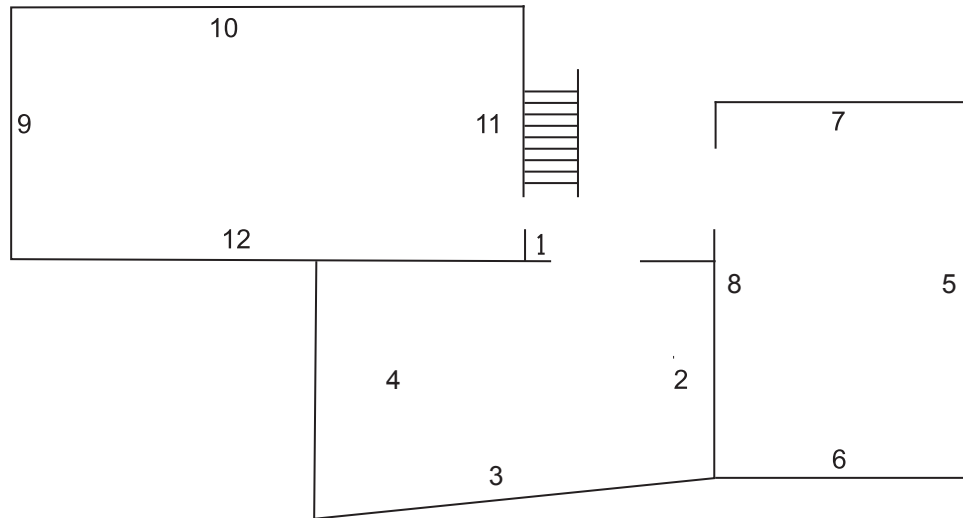
BRIDGET RILEY GALLERY

9. *November 18, 2020 (Continental Army Plaza, Brooklyn)*
2023

Oil paint, graphite and colored pencil on linen

FLOORPLAN

First Floor



10. *February 26, 2021 (Meserole Street & Avenue of Puerto Rico, Brooklyn)*

2023

Oil paint and graphite on linen

274 x 182.9 cm

11. *April 20, 2023 (Continental Army Plaza, Brooklyn)*

2023

Oil paint and graphite on linen

182.9 x 228.6 cm

12. *March 15, 2023 (Meserole Street & Avenue of Puerto Rico, Brooklyn)*

2023

Oil paint and graphite on linen

129.5 x 152.4 cm

This gallery is organised through two pairs of works, each showing a particular site that has changed over time. The first two focus on a defaced monument to George Washington. The second in the pair captures the city's response to the vandalism. By painting over the plinth, a game of cat and mouse is created between defacer and state, both trying to control the image. The enduring permanence of bronze, the chosen medium for disseminating the image of colonial power, collides with the contingency of the spray can. The second pair depict a boarded-up deli. In one version a poster of the iconic civil rights movement image of Gloria Richardson pushing aside a soldier's bayoneted rifle in 1968 is pasted on the hoarding. In the next painting the image has been covered over with graffiti. These works can be read as a powerful metaphor of the continuing pace of history, the ebb and flow of forgetting and remembrance, political change, and the erasure of liberty under successive governments.

BIOGRAPHY

Esteban Jefferson (b. 1989, New York) is an artist based in New York. Solo shows include 303 Gallery, New York (2023); Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles (2021); Tanya Leighton, Berlin (2020), and White Columns, New York (2019). Group shows include Fire Figure Fantasy, ICA, Miami; Open Call, The Shed, New York; ESTAMOS BIEN, La Trienal, Museo del Barrio, New York; Art on the Grid, Public Art Fund, New York.

SUPPORTED BY:

303 Gallery, New York

Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin

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Donald Porteous

and those who wish to remain anonymous.

EVENTS

WRITING WORKSHOP:

LARA HAWORTH & LABEJA KODUA

20 Nov, 6:30–9pm

This workshop will explore how we experience certain places and architectures in different emotional states, and how we can focus in, zoom out, and play with this narrative distance through writing.

EXHIBITION TOUR: JAYDEN ALI

30 Nov, 6pm–8pm

Join Architect Jayden Ali for a special evening viewing and tour. Ali was the co-curator of the British Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale 2023, which centred on how diasporic communities help to construct the supportive framework of contemporary British life. Ali has shared his response to the murder of George Floyd through a powerful video and essay and will use this as a lens through which to relate to Jefferson's work.

For more information and to book go to goldsmithscca.art