
BEGIN FROM OBSERVATION

Teddy Benfield | Richard Keen | Samuel Stabler

April 20 - May 29, 2022

Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Boston, MA

Abigail Ogilvy Gallery proudly presents *Begin From Observation*, a three-person exhibition featuring Teddy Benfield (Boston, MA), Richard Keen (Brunswick, ME), and Samuel Stabler (Athens, GA). The exhibition title is derived from the techniques taught in an artist's first courses: when learning how to draw you must begin from observation. It is one of the most basic but true rules of learning composition, proportions, rendering, and everything else important that must be built upon before an artist can let themselves branch out or break these rules. The premier step any artist must take is learning how to draw directly from learning how to see. In this exhibition, each artist explores truth through abstraction as a method of viewing the world in its most authentic form. The artists render still life, landscapes, and portraiture, referencing art history's past combined with the materials of the present.

In his still life paintings, **Teddy Benfield** mixes a multitude of media to generate a dialogue between traditional still life genre painting and the relationships we have with marketplace consumerism through contemporary internet culture. Benfield's compositions are packed with the representational imagery we see every day from brands, logos, motifs and even patterns claimed by specific subcultures, like the black and white checkerboard pattern often associated with skaters. In doing so, Benfield opens up a conversation around the ever-changing definition of culture, and how it is so often dictated by class differences.

Conversely, **Richard Keen** aims to remove the representational details in his work, obscuring lush landscapes by paring them down to color and form. Keen's saturated, geometric compositions explore the relationship between nature, the man-made, and the space that exists between. In breaking down his subjects to the most basic elements, he finds truth in their simplicity, allowing both himself and his audience to see these subjects through their own unique lens. His motifs are inspired by his time spent in the woods of Maine.

In his debut presentation at Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, artist **Samuel Stabler** guides his viewers through familiar imagery with a modern eye. Stabler, as many great artists before him, revisits the work of old masters, playing off of the subject matter to create a picture that is wholly his own. Using highlighter neon colors and gold gouache, Stabler chooses parts of the original compositions that he has felt need more attention than they have previously been granted. In a recent interview with Gallery 151, Stabler states: "I like the idea of taking

something that was maybe forgotten and bringing it back out." In doing so, he alters our perception of the Western canon and celebrates the cycle of reinvention in art history.

All together the three artists' work combines meticulously rendered details that inspire deep examination. A reminder of the importance of the past in order to present subject matter in a way that both remains dynamic and speaks to the way they see the world in this moment.

Teddy Benfield is a Boston based artist from Connecticut (b. 1992). He received his MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University (2018) and his BFA in Visual arts from Union College (2015) as well as a certificate in Sneaker Design from Fashion Institute of Technology (2019).

Richard Keen (b. 1971, Pennsylvania) is a contemporary abstract artist who works in a variety of media, including painting, murals, and sculpture. He has shown in numerous New England solo and group exhibitions at the University of Maine Museum of Art, Elizabeth Moss Gallery, The Painting Center, New York, Gallery 49, Simon Gallery, and Barrett Art Center, among others. Keen has been featured in Art New England, Boston Voyager Magazine, Portland Herald Press, and Maine Home and Design.

Georgia-born and based artist **Samuel Stabler** is known for his contemporary take on Old Master paintings. The artist recreates these masterworks in highly detailed pen-and-ink drawings, which he then obscures with streaks of neon yellow, adding a contemporary update to centuries-old masterpieces. Sourcing images from the internet, he also creates meticulous cut-outs, transforming once familiar subjects into abstract webs of line and contour. "Old Masters used to paint the masters before them," he has said. "The internet age has allowed me to have this huge access to information, so I'm appropriating it in the way that makes sense to me now."

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