

We have undergone a revolutionary period unprecedented in modern times. Political, social, economic upheaval, and even climate change. The role of the artist in such a period is to react, reflect, and record their experience and materialize this process for the reception of the greater public in both the present and the future.

With regard to this new body of work by gallery artist Jonni Cheatwood, both the current Covid pandemic as well as the Black Lives Matter movement have contributed to forming the basis of his new body of work. "My motivation here is to explore expressions in the social struggle, the nature of reality," Cheatwood says from his home in Los Angeles. "It's basically self-retrospective."

The works are typical of Cheatwood's growing oeuvre: self-reflexive, tongue-in-cheek, humorous, and light-hearted... but what we are also seeing for the first time is a poignant, relatable, and altogether human side of artist's personal struggle as mixed-race black and Latino man in modern-day America: "[I wanted to discuss] being a BIPOC, being in an interracial marriage, my own anxieties and struggles." The artist discusses that the works aren't all necessary reactionary or revolutionary, but internalized, where meaning exists 'beneath' these figures.

Sure, the exhibition title, *Live! From Therapy*, is certain to get a self-aware chuckle, but there's a very real, very human emotional experience that Cheatwood is exploring with these works. The resulting works suggest Cheatwood's own personal redirection, as reflected in his art. The artist discusses his own feelings of dissociation: having to do a 'code switch' between black, Latino, and white America. Exploring his own familial tree for meaning and even imagery. "I asked my family a lot of hard questions about their families. We found some very old photos. They had style. They lived post-slavery. Some works in this show are based on these images."

This historicity is obviously of great personal gravitas to the artist and it is thus unsurprising that the new works highlight the figurative. Included in the works are nods to his 'old' artistic persona appear as *mise-en-abyme*, or 'paintings within paintings'; and the experience of what appears to be a therapist's office in varying degrees of representation and deconstructing further into abstraction. Perhaps this is a reaction to a feeling of being cloistered, the claustrophobia of a worldwide pandemic where ripples are being felt throughout society, and political unrest and racial upheaval. Perhaps it is a response to not knowing exactly how to feel in a shape-shifting world; as a BIPOC; as an artist wanting to explore various modes. The works seem to engage with this period of transition: 'Paint what you know' is a frequently accepted idiom, and Cheatwood's paintings deep-dive into this introspection; frenetic but contained, amusing but empathetic, somewhere between chaos and control, figurative and abstract.

Above all, Cheatwood deftly handles a switch in his artistic vernacular that feels neither forced nor uncomfortable – he seems totally at ease expanding his lexicon to the figurative, further defining his prowess as a painter. We are excited to welcome you into the metaphoric psychologist's office... Here, we will partake in the ongoing discussion between self, society, and creative expression. *We go LIVE in three, two, one...*

LIVE! FROM THERAPY

Jonni Cheatwood

PREVIEW: SATURDAY 29 MAY (1-4PM)
EXHIBITION: 29 MAY UNTIL 3 JULY 2021



LONER PHASE (2021)

Oil, acrylic alkyd, acrylic polymer, wood stain and digitally printed canvas on cotton sewn to canvas 172 x 140 cm



DON'T TELL ME WHEN TO CHA-CHA! (2021)

Oil, acrylic alkyd and cold wax on canvas sewn to linen 175 x 152 cm

J O N N I C H E A T W O O D



Jonni Cheatwood is a Brazilian-American visual artist working across many different disciplines including painting, photography, graphic design and textile art. Cheatwood's work describes the broad visual ideas stemming from still life, abstraction and minimalism, but his approach is a wonderful amalgam of his artistic disciplines in which veritable scraps of canvas are hand-sewn together before his idiosyncratic mark-making is thereafter applied to the newly created surface. Denim, mesh, burlap sacks, t-shirts, blankets, t-shirts, screen-prints, and even his father's worn leather satchel have all made their way into his work at one time or another. The graffiti-like scribbles, scratches and primitive colours of Cheatwood's work is the controlled chaotic work of an erudite expressionist brought up on Saturday morning cartoons; suggesting deconstructed contour lines and bright, unforgiving primary colours often applied directly from the tube or oversize pastel. Beginning with direct marks, squiggles and doodles, Cheatwood reacts and builds up his compositions over time, working with the studio detritus that can build up as a result of working on the floor and from the physical nature of his process - allowing this to become part of his formation of the work. The many references housed in his work - whether intentional or unintentional - seem like a patchwork of Cheatwood's own autobiography - and the works come across like humorous albeit highly personalized recollections of his life at various times.

ONNI CHEATWOOD (b. 1986, Thousand Oaks, CA) lives and works in Los Angeles, California. He graduated from Arizona State University, Tempe, in 2011. Solo exhibitions include: 'Fresh Out of Fiddles', Makasiini Contemporary, Turku, Finland (2020); 'Tyger Tyger', Urban Spree, Berlin, Germany (2019); 'That's Dallas Baby, Artual Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon (2019); 'Dressed Up for the Letdown', Over the Influence, Hong Kong, (2018); 'She's Heavy on the Razzmatazz', MAKASIINI CONTEMPORARY, Turku, Finland (2018) and; 'Same Hero, New Boots', TW Fine Art, Brisbane, Australia (2018). Group exhibitions/art fairs include: Art Fair Tokyo with OTI, 'Fresh Out of Fiddles', MAKASIINI Contemporary, (2020), UNTITLED San Francisco, MAKASIINI Contemporary (2020); 'Seven Days Are Too Long', Mirus Gallery, Denver, Colorado (2019); 'The Atlantic Bridge', Galerie Kremers, Berlin, Germany (2019); 'Office Hours', New Museum, Los Angeles, California (2018); 'View From the Cheap Seats', Chimento Contemporary, Los Angeles, California (2018); 'The Urban Experience', Artual Gallery, Beirut, Lebanon (2018); 'FRESHAF', TW Fine Art, Brisbane Australia (2017); and 'Buy What You Love', Rema Hort Mann Foundation, New York NY (2017). Cheatwood first exhibited with BEERS London for the group exhibition '75 Works on Paper' (2017), he exhibited at Volta NY with BEERS in March 2018 and EXPO Chicago with BEERS in September 2019. We are excited to debut Cheatwood's first London solo exhibition with us on 29 May 2021 and will run until 3 July.