

Kai Matsumiya

Elliott Jamal Robbins

Solo exhibition: "The Lancer, The Liberator, The Marauder"

June 13th – July 25th

Opening reception: Sunday, June 13th (4-8pm)

He's searching for solid ground. A tour of non-places (motels, deserted roads, blank fields, television screens, billboards) chart the periphery of Elliott Jamal Robbins's second solo exhibition at Kai Matsumiya. The scenes, both still and moving, constitute glimpses - glimpses into a desired freedom defined by its banality. Eyes and faces flood the landscape, every scene one of scrutiny - but whose eyes are they? The Marauder's direction, as his transfigured form traverses the distinctly Western landscape, is of little importance. The Liberator is no teacher, and no education will offer a passport to the future. The Lancer stands stern unaffected.

Robbins's avatar is not an object or agent of desire, but rather, one which is less bound by its pursuits. This is a meditation on a figure that is in a constant state of observation. Loose, wet, immediate brushstrokes and the unframed edges of raw paper transfigure the maturing protagonist, leading the viewer to question if representational manipulation is truly the antithesis of liberation. The sequence of images in this exhibition comprises a room of situations where the gaze becomes the subject, where the lights never go out. If there is a Cyclops, does that also mean there is a "Nobody"? Greek mythological heroes would penetrate the eye of the Cyclops and blind him with their spears; Robbins's anti-hero blinds the Cyclops with something else. "Who is there?!" cried Homer's Polyphemus; Odysseus responded "Nobody". Here, Robbins's implication of a "Nobody" marks a transformation from the artist's reappropriation of the minstrel in his previous work, to the Marauder, the Lancer, and the Liberator.

Unlike a traditional epic, the works presented showcase only arrivals and the climax of becoming. Hushed silence envelops the viewer upon entrance into the gallery front - turned filmhouse where *Choo Choo Trains* and *Child by Tiger* screen on loop. In their own ways, each film looks to the past to consider what may exist on the other side of liberation. *Choo Choo Trains* raises certain questions – are these scenes from memory, or fantasy, or both? Who is cause and who is effect? Who is the monster and who is the savior? *Child by Tiger*, a text based diaristic animation, brings us to a nexus realm where the vicissitudes of the everyday in a town called Ashville psychologically and symbolically clash with the real events of a shooting spree. Deeper inwards, on the other side of the gallery, one finds an assemblage of watercolor-based works standing in motion along the walls. The transfigurational aesthetic of the figures in motion transgresses. Freedom, autonomy, illegality and love: this body of work is violently marked by the Lancer. Marks instantiate the medium of drawing, which Robbins expands upon through the time-based, 20th century dialect of silent cartoons. The role which the mediums of watercolor and hand-drawn animation embody is one of a unique personal identification; in the artists' own words, they are "mediums that have been underutilized, looked over, perpetually let down or ignored...they feel like kindred spirits in this regard."

At the heart of the exhibition, what is our position: the Lancer, the Liberator, or the Marauder?

Elliott Jamal Robbins (b. 1988) is a multi-media artist based in Tucson, Arizona, born and raised in the state of Oklahoma. He has held exhibitions at Nagel Draxler (Germany); Drawing Center (NY); Kunsthalle Kade (Amsterdam, Netherlands); Housing Gallery (NY); Phoenix Art Museum; Greene Naftali Gallery (NY); Flint Institute of the Arts; Martos Gallery (NY). He is the recipient of the Ecktenstein-Geigy award at ART Liste for excellence in the arts. He received his MFA from the University of Arizona (2017). His works have been reviewed in Art Forum, Hyperallergic, Contemporary Art Daily, and Time Out New York.

wed-sun 12-6

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