

PARK VIEW / PAUL SOTO

Elliott Jamal Robbins

*A marker, or maybe more.*

September 11 – November 6, 2021

Los Angeles

Park View / Paul Soto are proud to announce *A marker, or maybe more.*, a solo exhibition by the Oklahoma City-born, Tucson-based artist Elliott Jamal Robbins. This is Robbins' first exhibition with the gallery and his first in Los Angeles. An opening reception will be held on Saturday September 11 from 3 to 6pm, and the exhibition will run through November 6 in our Los Angeles location.

Robbins continues to upend conventional readings of identity, gender, and sexuality in artworks that burst open categorized ways of understanding a body and a life. He is known best for his silent, hand-painted animated films which fantastically depict seemingly mundane lived experiences. These works register a matrix of references from the personal to the history of western civilization, formulating a high-energy vernacular collage. By isolating and queering these liminal moments which traditionally go unnoticed, Robbins reveals the political and social structures which undergird life.

Within the frame, Robbins positions his figures and narratives between broad, and often times stereotyped societal readings of blackness and masculinity, and a subjective position-taking, which invites both confrontation and connection with the viewer. The exhibition comprises a trio of recent hand-painted animations, a number of large scale watercolors lining the gallery's walls, and a suite of small scale watercolors hung in a grid. The works play with montage through liquid compositions that shape lightness and darkness. They radiate with pools of color and form, while his restrained palette simultaneously imbues the works with mystery and shadowiness, noir-like.

Robbins' series of larger watercolors here provide an open-ended interpretive space. Are we witnessing a fictive narrative or a memory? It is possibly a road trip, where a character, who may or may not be a proxy of the artist himself, encounters creatures within a natural and symbolic world. The title of his exhibition *A marker, or maybe more.*, provides language in which to view his works. External markers of geography detail space, in which the body is entitled to a wide, perspectival experience, to move around freely, though it is a freedom which is mitigated by external forces. But also there is a suggestion through the videos and his watercolors of an internal marker that folds open: a world is imagined where one may daydream and shape-shift reality while simultaneously coping with and reacting to its gaze.

In one watercolor, a bird alights on his character's leg, which twists in a comic way to offer a perch. His longstanding engagement with comics, here in particular the Fleischer Brothers cartoons, lends the works a sense of levity while also looking squarely at the racist depictions within the history of cartoons, and more broadly American visual culture. In another, the artist paints a wide, infinite vista which is encrusted with abstract washes of color along the horizon. His painted marks blur his figures and their surroundings, imbuing the works with anti-representational qualities, in which impressions are but vehicles for interpretation which reveal as much as they deny, carving out private space.

Within a grouping of small scale works, figures bend and twist, cry, laze in the nude, dance, and shoot up from bed.

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Robbins offers up a phantasmagoria of symbolism which operate glyph-like, charting possibilities for self understanding as well as understanding of the world.

Elliott Jamal Robbins (b. 1988, Oklahoma City) is a multimedia artist based in Tucson, Arizona. He has held exhibitions at Galerie Nagel Draxler, Berlin; The Drawing Center, New York; Kunsthalle Kade, The Netherlands; Housing Gallery, New York; Phoenix Art Museum; Greene Naftali Gallery, New York; Flint Institute of the Arts, Michigan; and Martos Gallery, New York, among others. He received his MFA from the University of Arizona in 2017. His works have been reviewed in *Artforum*, *Hyperallergic*, and *Time Out New York*.

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