

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

JOSHUA ABELOW: *RELAX* at Arts+Leisure, May 10th – July 19th, 2014.
Reception on Saturday, May 10th from 7-10pm.

Arts+Leisure is proud to present, for its first project in UES/Spanish Harlem, *RELAX* – a new series of drawings by Joshua Abelow. Replete with a narrative of high- and lowbrow imagery ranging from exaggerated penises and cartoon breasts, to self-portraits, stick figures, warlocks, ghouls and misfits, Abelow is a poster boy for disaffected post-Gen X youth, as much influenced by and involved in social media as he is with Jungian and Freudian symbolism. *RELAX* shows an artist who is totally at ease with drawing, rare in an age of conceptual and digital artmaking. With a sure hand and a Matisse-ian simplicity and flair, Abelow chronicles the Rabelasian adventures and quixotic trials and tribulations of an artist wending his way towards emotional and artistic maturity within an urban framework - NYC. The people Abelow portrays in his rhythmic graphite on paper sketches are not so much caricatures as much as character-driven tragic heroes and heroines, bumping and colliding with each other in a clumsy yet erotic dance. Many of the drawings ironically portray running, hustling figures as well, at odds with the title of his show. They clamor for attention and respect, driven by a sexual neediness and narcissism that verges on the comic absurd. These drawings include a fair amount of Abelow's signature text, quirky titles and exclamations ("HELLOOO," "DEEPER DEEPER," "TRUE ROMANCE," "TRUST ME BITCH," "INSTA DEATH," etc), which give the work a humorous, narrative slant. Above all, these scenes make us examine our own identity, our needs and vulnerability, our fragile egos, our fear and joy and addictive desire. The result is a very human and reaffirming embrace, a realization of what it means to be an artist and to be alive today.

RELAX is composed of 25 drawings from a two-year period, never before shown, framed in a Crayola spectrum of stained maple molding against off-white mats. They are all 30x22" in format, lending a quality of storybook to the presentation. Typically, Abelow has presented a wide-ranging, salon-style body of work in previous exhibitions, which included paintings and drawings, geometric abstraction and figurative representation, but for his solo project at Arts+Leisure the artist has purposefully pared it down and limited his focus to this graphic series of work on paper. By doing so, he stills and distills the narrative to allow a considered reflection and contemplation of the pathos, sensibility and dialogue inherent in his work.

Joshua Abelow is an artist living and working in New York. Solo exhibitions include "OH! ABELOW" at James Fuentes, New York (2011), "DUMB & EASY" at Tomorrow Gallery, Toronto (2011), "FAMOUS ARTIST" at Sorry We're Closed, Brussels (2012), "ABELOW SCHMABELOW" at Brand New Gallery, Milan (2012), "Songs From A Room" at Devening Projects, Chicago (2012), "PAINTER" at Wasserman Projects, Birmingham, MI (2013) and "ABELOW ON DELANCEY" at James Fuentes, New York

(2013). Recent publications include; ART FICTION, Karma, New York (2013), ART TIME, James Fuentes, New York (2013) and Painter's Journal, Peradam and James Fuentes (2012). This fall Abelow has a two-man show with Gene Beery at Bodega, New York (2014). He is represented by James Fuentes in New York. And curates/runs : <http://joshuaabelow.blogspot.com/>

Arts+Leisure is the project space of Freight+Volume gallery in Chelsea. Located at 1571 Lexington Ave between 100th and 101st streets in the UES/Spanish Harlem, opposite Church of the Life-Changers and a few blocks from El Museo del Barrio, it was founded in the spring of 2014 by Nick Lawrence, himself a painter and writer, as well as owner/director of Freight+Volume, DNA Summer Residency in Provincetown, MA, and co-founder/partner of former LFL Gallery in NYC. Hours of Arts+Leisure are Wed-Sun 11-6 or by appointment.

Please join us on Saturday, May 10th between 7-10pm to celebrate the inaugural show at A+L and Joshua Abelow's *RELAX*. Refreshments will be served. A limited edition book of the artist's drawings and poems, also titled *RELAX*, will accompany the exhibition. For more information or to obtain a pdf of the show please contact Nick Lawrence at nick@artsandleisure.net or 917-880-7299.