

# NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

*Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.*

January 27-February 26, 2022

Opening reception Thursday, January 27, 4-8 PM

Nicelle Beauchene Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of recent works by Elliott Jerome Brown Jr. For the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery, Brown presents new portraits and abstract photographs that reflect on materiality, memory, and intimacy. Two large sculptures—with shapes akin to a wall and a box—explore the structural aspects of images through variations in their depth and spatial on. What follows is a text by New York-based curator Katherine Adams.

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Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.'s new body of work explores the image as a space of ellipsis, in which works' affective and spatial intimacies exist on the threshold of the inexpressible. In these new photographs, images sometimes seem to separate out from their material supports. Even in close-up portraits, subjects and expressions don't quite find resolution within the image—strong hues and brightly lit faces seem to deflect our attention from the subjects' inner world. New portraits yield intense, combative, and sometimes uncanny scenes that are at the same time tender and graceful. In more abstract works, Brown reveals areas of visual friction and pictorial indistinction where we might have sought out clarity of form. These images challenge pictorial legibility, but not through refusing circulation. Instead, they remain open to the indeterminate and complex feelings in which language is latent, silent.

Many of these new works occupy a tense emotional register, trespassing boundaries of negative affect to allow for expressions of conflict, interpersonal failure, or fraught intimacy. Portraits suspend us amidst visual atonalities. Lush and at times romantic images appear visually beautiful, but also remain ambiguous constructions in a larger space of reflection and memory. In one, an arm is not quite cradling, not quite cutting away a head glancing elegantly toward the edge of the image. In another image, a moment of shock or conflict has just erupted, photographically bracketed by a slightly oblique, low angle that abstracts from the sharpness of antagonism. In a third, a layer of glass embedded in the image frame refracts and complicates the legibility of individual emotions, diffusing apparent tension into a mist of light and texture. In these scenes, photography bears neither the direct correspondence of 'indexicality' nor the evocative iconography of 'presence.' Luring us into a difficult interval between the amorphous happening and the trace it leaves behind as an action, Brown's works explore spaces of uncertain intimacy at the same time as they apply new photographic tools that mingle abstraction with precise composition.

In contrast to many prior works by the artist, this new body of work is all untitled. This signals a shift away from a poetic toward an atmospheric structuring of images' points of access. Throughout the exhibition, Brown demonstrates an attention to the space between the physical material of a photograph and its image. Sometimes the interface between the two is seamless. Yet we often feel uncertain where we're looking, as textured or blurred surfaces disperse the subjects whose images they also hold. In a wall sculpture that opens the exhibition, Brown has intentionally reduced the focus of images during the printing process, creating spaces of indistinction and blur that force the image and its space of projection into nonalignment. This yields not only an area of opacity, but a potentiation of the space of memory, in which line and form are mutable and dreamily suggestive. In the center of the gallery, a five-plane sculptural work probes photography as a constructive object—more than merely visual—and orients us toward the structural layers of Brown's photographs. Depth becomes a frame for a recessed image embedded furtively at the back of the sculpture. In this exhibition's group of compositionally arresting images, Brown both anchors and submerges us, diffusing the image to show how it intermingles with affect and demands its own structural forms.

— Katherine Adams

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**Elliott Jerome Brown Jr.** (b. 1993) lives and works in New York. He has had solo exhibitions at Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York (2022, 2019); Staple Goods, New Orleans (2019) and Baxter St. at the Camera Club of New York (2019). Recent group exhibitions include Swiss Institute, New York (2021); RISD Museum of Art, Providence (2021); The Arts Club of Chicago (2020); New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans (2020); Public Art Fund, New York (2020); The MAC, Belfast (2019); PPOW, New York (2019); Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2018); Yossi Milo Gallery, New York (2018); Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York (2018); We Buy Gold, New York (2018), among others.

Recent museum acquisitions include the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.