

HANNAH HOFFMAN GALLERY

Dominique Knowles
My Beloved
June 3 - August 5, 2023

In the newest series of paintings by Dominique Knowles, scale and gesture are framed within conditions of intimacy and loss. The exhibition's framework was spurred by the artist's desire to honor his horse that passed away in 2021. His ongoing period of mourning results from the sacred relationship between rider and horse, a connection marked by trust and reciprocity. Knowles compares the painting of a horse to the brushing of one. The mode of composing his works mimics that of equine care, from the wide sweeps on large surfaces to concentrated performances on smaller ones. To feel the bristles glide across a body and effectively translate this requires the mining of corporeal memory. A poetics of mark-making is thus established and remains integral to Knowles's practice. Observe the delicacy of each brushstroke, as he lovingly painted these objects of grief and desire.

This body of work thus takes on the aesthetics and sentiments of religion, with one painting constructed in the shape of an altar painting. Knowles observes these paintings like one observes the body during a wake. Already fixed in his mind's eye is the image of the horse's body floated away by crane, like a resurrection in the sky. The artist's initial plan was to stage an exhibition within a church, which was reoriented into experimentation with the shapes of his canvases.

In his own literalization of church interiors, the Dutch Golden age painter Pieter Saenredam emptied the cavernous rooms and focused instead on the "bare bones," divested of religious sentiment. These works are described by Roland Barthes as amounting to "a very up-to-date aesthetic of silence." While Saenredam captured the architectures with cold precision, Knowles seeks the coordinates of spiritual wonder within these zones of worship and sorrow. The artist instead pursues a primordial silence, one that vibrates with sublimity. His version of "holy space" prescribes a transformation, as though the experience of being inside could provide a slight elevation from the world beyond its walls. These paintings are flattened reliquaries containing fragments of intimacy and longing, love and death.

A gallery's white walls are not necessarily neutral, they still bear the weight of a hue. Art objects are set against each shade's nature, influencing the conception of a painting or sculpture. Knowles recognizes this situation, mounting his work on walls painted brown. His palette of choice, too, largely revolves around various shades of brown as well as the rainbow's top half, developed in alignment with the earth and his horse. He travels within the shades, pursuing a poetics of line and color. Knowles's paintings float out with ease, always in relation to one another.

While Knowles's paintings largely exist in pools of color, discernible lines persist as the assertion of presence. These discernible subjects are conceived in suggestion, rather than fully articulated. However, an unquestionable figure remains, one that doesn't need to be justified. The artist is interested in edges and the maintenance of visibility without exact illustration. Scale stages its own confrontation as well. Large canvases mime the effects of a mural, or a cave painting, offering extended space to dwell within.

- Reilly Davidson

Dominique Knowles (b. 1996 in The Bahamas) lives and works in Chicago and Paris. This is his first show with the gallery.

Knowles received both his MFA in Painting as a New Artist Society Award scholar in 2020 as well as his BFA in 2017 from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Recent solo exhibitions include Chapter NY, New York, NY (2022); *The Solemn and Dignified Burial Befitting My Beloved for All Seasons*, Galerie Emanuel Layr, Vienna, Austria (2021); *The Sun Sinks*, Soccer Club Chicago, IL (2020); *Ode to Tazz*, The Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI (2019). His work has been in numerous recent group exhibitions including Looking Back / The 12th White Columns Annual, White Columns, New York, NY (2023); *The Animal Within – Creatures in (and outside)*, mumok, Vienna, AT (2022); *Portals*, Misako and Rosen, Tokyo, JP (2022); *Fifteen Painters*, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, NY (2021) amongst others. Knowles has participated in a residency at The Suburban (Milwaukee, WI) and has curated a group exhibition at The Condo Association (Chicago, IL). His work is in the permanent collections of mumok, Vienna and the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw.

2504 W 7TH STREET, 2ND FLOOR, LOS ANGELES
+1 213 263 9681 WWW.HANNAHHOFFMAN.LA