

GENE'S

Gene's Gold by Joshua Abelow
February 22nd to April 5th, 2025

In the spring of 2008, Joshua Abelow had just graduated from the Cranbrook Academy of Art with his MFA and I had just graduated from Rutgers University with my BFA. The Great Recession was in full swing, but a young intellectual with a sense of humor gave at least half of the U.S. population a reason to hope for change. However, 16 years later, ninety-nine percent of the population has fallen into a deep depression due to the excessive side effects of inflation, stagnant wages, the exorbitant rise in cost of living, and the ever-widening gap in wealth distribution, yet only half of the depressed (at best) have the common sense to recognize who (or what) is to blame. And towards the end of Dubya's second term, what became clear to those of us who were entering the job market for the first time was that some corporations — and some people, for that matter — were “too big to fail.” This is the new status quo, no?

That September, Josh had exchanged the bleak existence of the United States for the grey skies and cheap rents of Berlin. I was living in a barely furnished, overpriced apartment in a Section 8 building in Bed-Stuy. I spent most of my days working for an artist and going to see art shows; I spent most of my nights painting, writing poetry, and working on my graduate school applications. When I wasn't working, I was often chatting online with Josh. We would talk shit on the American government and economy, we would dish about the art world, and he would share exciting stories about his European travels; sadly, I couldn't really reciprocate since I was young and poor, but it was fun to have this near-daily pen pal with whom I was forming this brotherly connection.

In 2009, I made my own escape — I left New York City for Richmond to attend Virginia Commonwealth University. By the time I concluded my graduate studies two years later, I moved back to the city and Josh was living there, too. It was then that we began our real-life bond that would last a lifetime. After a few years, though, Michael Bloomberg had made NYC seem like a place that was practically impossible for me to continue to want to permanently reside — the Brooklyn riverfront was being dominated by ugly condos, the subways were being packed by millennial Wall Street bros in fiancé vests loudly sniffing hardened residue in the morning and talking about the previous night's conquests into their Bluetooth pieces. I no longer felt at home. One thing led to another, and my girlfriend and I at the time decided to head west for Los Angeles.

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The night we drove off, though — October 10th, 2013 — was the opening of Josh's big opening for his exhibition, *Abelow on Delancey*, at James Fuentes. There was no way I could miss my boy's show; it was jam-packed, he was beaming, and everyone in attendance was in high spirits. Josh has since left Fuentes and the city, but that was a special show and that was a special moment in the art world, particularly in New York and Los Angeles. In this specific show, Josh used his tentacled web presence — his massively influential blog at the time (ART BLOG ART BLOG) — as subject matter; he repeated "BLOG BLOG" alongside dancing stick figures with giant erections donning top hats — they functioned like Fred Astaire on poppers, courting curators and collectors far and wide. The exhibition could be interpreted as satire, critique, or simply spectacle — equating online persona with performative entertainment. There is a long history of dancers being depicted in art, from Degas to Manet to Matisse, but with *Abelow on Delancey*, Josh chose not to formally celebrate body or movement, but rather tonally mocked the blasé bravado of a certain type of male figure that now, in retrospect, points to the egomaniacal madness driving big tech's hijacking of American politics.

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about that last recession (and the speculated current and/or oncoming one) and oppression and depression. Our capitalistic society and our two-party system — all of it, it's all clearly so coercive and corrosive. It's what leads to predatory lending, hostile takeovers, federal looting, etc. However, it's also what leads certain people to open alternative spaces that provide platforms for inspired artists to exhibit without fear or anxiety.

Josh made his first gold paintings four election cycles ago while living in Berlin. He recently started making new ones in reaction to the state of luxury, privilege, inequity, inequality, and general tumult consuming and destroying our nation. Let's all be clear here: Greed is not good; it never was. It feels right to show these paintings now; it feels great to show them here.

- Keith J. Varadi, February 2025

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Gold Painting, Oil on burlap, 12 x 9 inches, 2024

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Gold Painting, Oil on linen, 12 x 9 inches, 2008

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Gold Painting, Oil on linen, 12 x 9 inches, 2024

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Gold Painting, Oil on linen, 12 x 9 inches, 2009

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Gold Painting, Oil on linen, 12 x 9 inches, 2008

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GENE'S



Gold Painting, Oil on linen, 16 x 16 inches, 2009

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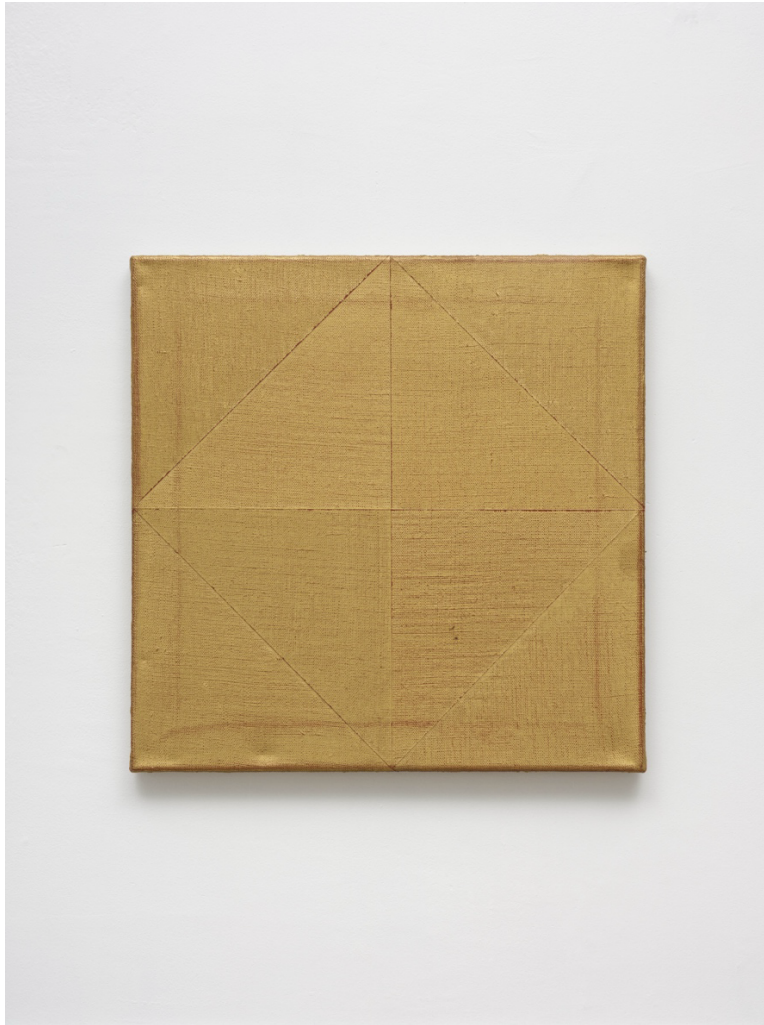


Gold Painting, Oil on linen, 16 x 16 inches, 2008

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Gold Painting, Oil on linen, 16 x 16 inches, 2009

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Bear, Frederick, MD, Chromogenic print, 4 x 6 inches, 2024

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Dog, Frederick, MD, Chromogenic print, 4 x 6 inches, 2024

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Witch, Frederick, MD, Chromogenic print, 4 x 6 inches, 2023

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Alien, Frederick, MD, Chromogenic print, 4 x 6 inches, 2024

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Parked Car, Frederick, MD, Chromogenic print, 4 x 6 inches, 2023

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Out of Order, Frederick, MD, Chromogenic print, 4 x 6 inches, 2024

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