



## KING'S LEAP

105 Henry Street (Store 5)

New York, NY 10002

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**Joe W. Speier**

*Making Space*

August 2 – August 4, 2025, and by appointment until the installation's demolition

On Tuesday, May 3, 2025, I agreed to sign the No Gallery lease for 105 Henry Street Store #4 over to King's Leap, to expand their programming footprint. I did include one caveat in this agreement—that King's Leap incorporated an exhibition that utilized the wall Alec and I built in June of 2021, to separate the two galleries, as a conceptual element to an exhibition. I didn't expect Alec to take my request seriously, until I received a call from him two weeks ago about writing a text for a Joe Speier solo exhibition. It would highlight a performance of Joe punching holes through the wall—the same wall that Alec and I put up years ago.

I have known Joe since pandemic'ing in Baltimore in 2020. I met Alec a few months after that at a Nandi Loaf solo he hosted in some small space he had in Tribeca. The show included a live feed of Nandi Loaf playing *Call of Duty* (badly) projected on the wall and an installation of multiple cellphones mining something (if I remember correctly). I remember being annoyed with the show because of the gaming aspect of it and I expressed that to Joe. The following day Alec texted me an invitation to come in and have another look so he could explain a bit more about Nandi's practice. After that, Alec and I started talking about the idea of finding a ground-floor space together in Chinatown, where we could negotiate a more affordable rent for two spaces. We ended up finding this rough storefront on the corner of Henry and Pike that we could split in half. Both spaces needed a lot of work, but the price was right and so was the location. Shortly after opening, other galleries opened in the other surrounding vacant spaces on the corner. Subsequent exhibitions started getting overwhelmingly packed, and Henry Street became more of a destination for people to discover new programming.

This morning, at 7:28am (July 29, 2025), I received a call from Joe. It was the first time we had talked in a few months. We spoke for over an hour about what was happening in the downtown scene and various figures that disappeared. We also talked about the challenges we faced with each other in the past. He explained to me his disappointment and frustrations with living and working in the art world. It's something I relate to. We talked about the two-year period where Alec and I didn't acknowledge one another. I forget the exact reasoning, but it probably had something to do with me being offended by something stupid and acting like a stubborn/passive aggressive baby about it. During the same time, I was not talking to Joe much either. Being in this scene was very much "choose your team" and regardless of our past friendship, Joe was going to back his team. If I remember correctly, the King's Leap/No Gallery beef was resolved through problems we had with our electric roll-down gates and them constantly breaking down. Alec was outside late at night, and I just decided to help him and it was like, "Ok problem resolved. I can let this go." Like going to a funeral and seeing a family member you haven't talked to for a few years over something, and then coming together through a

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common pain, resolving an issue without remembering the reason it started. I think collectively Alec and I have about 15K invested into fixing those stupid roll-down gates. The common pain was a financial one.

I have always been drawn to a more aggressive approach to art, performance, and curation. For me, it was a welcome juxtaposition to the overly commercial and decorative state that art has been in the past few years. When Joe explained his show to me, I imagined him punching a plywood-backed wall until his fist became bloody and ultimately turning to a mushy stub slapping against the wall, creating a type of paint brush, leaving bold and aggressive marks as if the wall was a battered canvas. Joe quickly awoke me from my daydream when he said that tools such as a sledgehammer would be used as well. I remember seeing the Paul McCarthy solo, *drawing, painting and as action, performance 1965 to 2021*, at Hauser & Wirth in late 2022. I was excited about his large “shit” drawings being exhibited on the top floor. I discovered that McCarthy used a type of peanut butter solution to emulate or fake a type of shit-look to his works. I remember being so upset about this. I was like, “Wow McCarthy is such a pussy. He should have used real shit.” Part of me turns my nose up at Joe’s performance because he isn’t willing to punch a plywood-backed wall until his hands turn to bloody stubs. But in reality, why would anyone commit that much to a world that’s unwilling to give back?

This is the crash out we have all experienced, either from our own making or by those on the same path. Where is the hope? The hope is punching through the wall with our bare fists. The hope is once we get there, we might find an object. But immediately after that, we’ll find another wall.

Text by Casey Gleghorn

**Joe W. Speier** (b. 1992, Cincinnati, OH) lives and works in New York. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *King’s Leap* (New York, NY), *Freddy* (Harris, NY), *Felix Art Fair* (Los Angeles, CA), *Plague Space* (Krasnodar, RU), *Springsteen* (Baltimore, MD), and *Gern en Regalia* (New York, NY). Selected group exhibitions include *JAG Projects at A365* (New York, NY), *Galerie Noah Klink* (Berlin, DE), *Hans Gallery* (Chicago, IL), *Mickey* (Chicago, IL), *In Lieu* (Los Angeles, CA), *Sebastian Gladstone* (Los Angeles, CA), *Harkawik* (New York, NY), *Shoot The Lobster* (New York, NY), *King’s Leap* (New York, NY), *Pik Deutz* (Cologne, DE), *Polansky Gallery* (Prague, CZ), and *Catbox Contemporary* (Queens, NY).