

Riley Payne

Ocean Size

November 22nd 2025 – January 18th 2026

Tops at Madison Avenue Park

151 Madison Avenue (viewable on Maggie H. Isabel St)
Memphis, TN 38103

On view 24 hours a day

How to depict the fracturing of language, humour and a reverence for nature in a world filled to the brim with utter lunacy? That is a persistent question dogging Riley Payne's practice, and one that drifts around the eight new paintings presented in *Ocean Size*, at Tops Gallery's Madison Avenue Park space.

As elusive and impatient as the modern attention span, these works offer up multiple readings through the use of instantly recognizable reference imagery. Yet the moment an interpretation is settled on the cards are reshuffled – through proximity to a neighbour painting, a slight tweak that the title conjures or by stepping back and viewing the exhibition as a whole, installed on a deep navy star-scape flanked by walls of dusty red and calming yellow.

A scene of romance gives way to one of a warming climate; a calming ocean tries its hardest to stabilize the pink skeleton tip-toeing along its ripples; an upside down world held in the hand of a sculpture appears stable only for an instant before a plant orgy raises its tendrilled hand for some attention.

Perhaps the point is no point - perhaps that's the problem?

Throughout these contradictions reassurances emerge, tools to cope with the onslaught of an image-soaked modern world start to line themselves up - colour energizes, plants have always been here, painting is still an option.

Riley Payne (b. 1979, Melbourne, Australia) is a self-taught artist who lives and works between New York and Miami. He has exhibited extensively in the U.S and internationally, including solo exhibitions at Mellow, NYC; Fish Island Gallery, CT; New Release, NYC and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne. His work has been included in group exhibitions including Harper's, NYC; Amez Yavuz, Sydney; Tops, Memphis and the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Payne's work is held in numerous public and private collections and he has released two publications of drawings – 'Mad Deep Thoughts' (Perimeter Editions) and 'Nude Beach' (Self published in collaboration with Pau Wau Publications)