

JAS KNIGHT

b. 1977, Connecticut, US. Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, US.

Jas Knight depicts and celebrates contemporary African-American experience through the historical language of portraiture, still life and genre painting. Through masterful use of 16th and 17th century painting techniques, Knight translates his love of French and Dutch traditions into portraits of people doing everyday 21st century things, like checking their email or making the bed - focusing on the lives of everyday New Yorkers, including himself and friends, as well as some settings far from home.

Playing with the lines between reality and fiction, Knight's paintings demurely subvert historical depictions of black subjects in academic painting, foregrounding the presence, personality and surrounding environment of everyday lives. His fascination with the role of draughtsmanship, perception and memory is honed through an ongoing series of master copies from Gérôme to Velázquez, which allow him to not only refine his technique but embody the perception of other artists, a way to truly see a painting and establish forms of communion with history, its many challenges and discoveries.

Included in his first solo exhibition, *Terrain*, are master copies of *Black Bashi-Bakouk* by Gérôme; *Henriette Goldschmidt*, *Elizabeth Winthrop Chanler*, *Manuel García* and *Venetian String Beaders* by Singer Sargent; *Murzynka* by Anna Bilińska-Bohdanowicz; *The Barber of Suez* by Bonnat; *Ferdinando Brandani* and *Portrait of Juan de Pareja* by Velázquez; and *Portrait of Samuel Ampzing* by Frans Hals. Together they represent some of the most renowned museums around the world – from the National Museum in Warsaw to the Museo del Prado in Madrid, Buffalo Albright-Knox Art Gallery in upstate New York and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in the heart of Manhattan.

Knight further cites the work of Henry Ossawa Tanner and photographer Gordon Parks as sources of inspiration, with particular reference to the unwavering authenticity of their works. For Knight, painting contains a problem-solving element: how to utilise the senses and elicit emotion. His portraits reflect a desire to speak plainly to people – from the most innocent child to the most learned of the elderly – “to be like the last traces of the sun’s wrath on the clouds of evening, a thing seen and appreciated.” Knight periodically chooses decorative historic frames for his artworks, pushing the margins of his portraits.

Jas Knight graduated from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, US, where he earned his BFA in painting. The recipient of a Greater Hartford Arts Council Innovation Grant and a Leonard Andrews Foundation Scholarship, Knight's work is held in the esteemed public collections in America including the Studio Museum Harlem, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Yale University, the US Department of State Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In 2023 Knight was featured in the exhibition *In Search of Juan de Pareja: From Arturo Schomburg to Jas Knight* at the Hispanic Society Museum & Library in New York, US in conjunction with *Juan de Pareja, Afro-Hispanic Painter* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US. *Terrain* at Hannah Barry Gallery, London is his first solo exhibition in the UK and in Europe.