

BROADWAY

James Benjamin Franklin

WHILEAWAY

April 13 – May 13, 2023

Broadway is pleased to announce *WHILEAWAY* a solo exhibition of new paintings by Detroit-based artist James Benjamin Franklin.

Beginning with signature asymmetrical structures, devised to force a rupture with the constraints of the rectangle, Franklin has sought to continuously free himself from habits and conventions that would hinder his search for an unpredictable mark. As the artist puts it:

"I was questioning my relationship to the traditional substrate/material of painting which I felt was intimidating, precious and therefore inhibiting. I wanted a support that was more alive or had a personality to it...more accessible. Once I allowed myself to accept that a painting can exist on anything, I began making objects that became my painting surfaces. With the canvas and stretcher bars gone, it became a very liberating experience to explore. Opened up a whole new world of possibilities of acceptance in image making. It was a weight off my shoulders, the object no longer fussy or formidable, became a more welcoming place to begin an unfeigned journey."

Built from plaster-treated polyurethane panels set in artist-built epoxy frames, the surface is laid with segments of cut fabric, carpeting and found blankets which provoke the initial composition. This base layer is then augmented with multiple applications of acrylic paint that is sprayed, poured and hand-brushed and finished with scatterings of sand and glitter.

Franklin allows for improvisation and accident to guide his hand, working on the floor and the wall and back again, he approaches each painting in the round. Additional tilting and leaning of the still wet surface allows for the accumulation of controlled drips and rivulets of paint adding gravity to his grab-bag of techniques.

The pigments also react to the variable absorption of the fabric's terrain, creating an unruly muting and bleeding of high-key color. As the artist arrives at a satisfactory surface, he will often apply a layer of clear medium which effectively seals it. He then can revisit this part of the painting with additional strata while preserving tone and topography beneath.

By this method, blasts of shimmering color and looping garlands and chevrons of spray overlay more muted passages of earthy brown and green, clotted and toothy from the textile below. The variety of application and material provides a disarmingly wide spectrum of texture and effect that both telegraphs the complexity of the process and slyly covers its tracks.

James Benjamin Franklin (b. 1972, Tacoma, WA) is an artist based in Detroit, Michigan. Franklin received his BFA from Art Center College of Design, Los Angeles, and his MFA in Painting from Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. His work has been featured in exhibitions at KMAC, Louisville, KY; the Cranbrook Museum of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI; the Speed Museum, Louisville, KY; FRONT International, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH; Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, Detroit, MI; and Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City, MX. His work has been featured in Bomb Magazine, Galerie Magazine, Hyperallergic, and the New York Times. The artist is represented by Reyes I Finn Gallery, Detroit, and Proyectos Monclova, Mexico City.