

PREVIEW

“Topsy-Turvy” Featuring Artist Jeff Way Shakes Things Up Lesley Heller Gallery



Artist Jeff Way’s series of multi-process artworks on view in “Topsy Turvy” at Lesley Hellery Gallery proves to be that rare exhibition where each work possesses a unique yet harmonious vantage point onto a recurring theme. Marking an ingenious turn of creative processes combined with a speculative approach to composition and figuration, Way’s “Topsy Turvy” series – created between 2006-2016 –

offer an alternative viewpoint onto painting as seen through distortion created by methods of reproduction: chiefly, a Xerox machine. The exhibit, opening on Wednesday, July 17 from 6-8 pm at Lesley Hellery gallery, is all the more compelling as it shines a light onto these works in their first solo foray out into the New York art world.

Latent tension between repetition and uniqueness mark a crux of the series' premise: each painting is unique and newly created, while Xerox was invented to copy existing documents. Way plays with the purpose behind this once-cutting edge technology in his recent series by distorting imagery nearly to its breaking point in this series of engrossing works: strong color contrasts span across each work, building up and breaking down across the canvas. Way is that rare artist whose dedication to color doesn't overwhelm the composition: instead, line and coloration combine in a frank, captivating look into the artist's psyche. One enthralling aspect of this exhibition is its self-conscious meditation upon the previous series of the artist's own work: a multi-disciplinary artist whose works have spanned museum walls ranging from the Whitney Museum to the New Museum, Way is able to confront and re-imagine the same impulses that have ignited his recognition in major institutions both in NYC and farther afield.



Grid Head Yellow Green Nose (2007) Acrylic on Canvas

While these paintings mark a departure from the artist's previous series of masks and mask-based performance, remnants of these same considerations are found in the distorted, multivalent heads present throughout the artist's "Topsy Turvy" series. While larger arrays of his figurative elements can evoke, upon reflection, Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* or Gauguin's *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*, Way instead seeks inspiration instead from the jarring impression left by German Expressionists Jawlensky and Nolde. With a firm grounding in Art History at NYU prior to transitioning to graduate as a Studio Art major, Way is in tune with his own personal iconography residing in his repetitive contemplation of the head as a symbol for self-expression and the psychological underpinnings arising from such endeavors. The artist will also be at Lesley Heller gallery for a talk accompanying the exhibition, slated for July 31, 2019 at 6:30 pm.



Topsy-Turvy Trio 3 (2016) Acrylic on Canvas

On view through August 17th, “Topsy Turvy” is a sweeping exhibition at Lesley Hellery gallery of works by Jeff Way that are not only exhibited for the first time as a complete series in New York City, but also offer forth the unique vision of an artist with deep ties to the evolution of New York City’s contemporary art scene.

Lambert, Audra. “Topsy-Turvy Featuring Artist Jeff Way Shakes Things Up Lesley Heller Gallery.” *ANTE. Mag*, 16 July 2019. [online]