

GAGOSIAN



SPENCER SWEENEY

Self-Portraits

Opening reception: Friday, November 9, 6–8pm

November 9–December 22, 2018

Park & 75, 821 Park Avenue, New York

Spencer Sweeney, *Sensual Shade*, 2018, oil and oil stick on linen, 66 × 42 inches (167.6 × 106.7 cm)

November 5, 2018

*Poetry is the only
answer to the solution.*

—Taylor Mead

Gagosian is pleased to present *Self-Portraits*, an exhibition of new paintings by Spencer Sweeney, his first with the gallery.

Self-portraiture, which Sweeney has equated to “working as your own analyst,” has been a persistent genre within his work. In both abstract and figurative modes, he weaves between recognizable human consciousness and expression. While Sweeney paints himself from photographs and mirrors, other personalities and influences of indeterminate gender and style

begin to pervade his self-depictions. The artist appears as a social creature, subject to the influence of others, as well as to the forces of environment and lifestyle. The imagery of these new works jumps between different styles with an irreverent resistance to strict categorization.

For twenty years, Sweeney has been a vital presence in the art, nightlife, and music of New York City. As musician and performance artist, he was a member of the seminal noise-art group Actress. As a painter and visual artist, he makes collages, paintings, self-portraits, and drawings, as well as environments and immersive experiences, such as the 2010 show in which he moved his living quarters into a gallery space and installed himself alongside the art objects on view. With *Self-Portraits*, he brings a humorous pathos to the act of introspection.

This new group of works comes right after *Headz*, his collaboration with Urs Fischer on a temporary, underground, word-of-mouth art studio in Lower Manhattan, where artists—both known and amateur; adults, students, teenagers—came together to make pictures of human heads, resulting in a collage-like portrait of a specific time and place. *Headz* also became a hub for improvisational jazz, and hosted performances by Lonnie Plaxico, Jay Rodriguez, Craig Harris, and Pheeroan akLaff. Sweeney’s engagement with “availablism”—a term coined by performance artist Kembra Pfahler to describe making art using what’s around you—pervades his portraiture as if psychological territory is being physically mapped onto the canvas. His ludic and anarchic self-portraits show a multiplicity of selves, interwoven with an examination of the creative process itself.

Spencer Sweeney was born in 1973, in Philadelphia, and lives and works in New York. Collections include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and High Museum of Art, Atlanta. Recent solo exhibitions include *Viva Las Vegas*, Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin (2017). Performances include *Hey, You Never Know* (1998, curated by Carol Greene and Kenny Schacter at 534 LaGuardia Place, New York); and *CrissCross: Some Young New Yorkers 3*, MoMA PSi, New York (1999). Group shows include *That Was Then, This Is Now*, MoMA PSi, New York (2008); and the 2006 Whitney Biennial, New York. In 2015, Kiito-San (New York) published *Spencer Sweeney*, a retrospective monograph featuring interviews with fellow artists and cultural figures from Sweeney’s many circles.

#SpencerSweeney

Press

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