

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

## BLOUINARTINFO

### Harmony Korine Brings His Freak-Out Zone to the UES

Scott Indrisek



*Harmony Korine (Photo by Scott Indrisek)*

No one seemed to know what to make of the announcement that, for the sophomore show at his Park & 75 location, Larry Gagosian would be tapping filmmaker Harmony Korine to show a series of paintings. It perhaps complicates matters that, shortly before Korine's May 12 opening, the blogosphere was eagerly eviscerating images of slapstick-erotic Seth Rogen canvases created by "Spring Breakers" star James Franco, which are supposedly slated for an unveiling at bluechip Pace at some point in the future.

But in many ways, Korine seems like the anti-Franco, not in the least because the former has a marked reluctance to stretch himself too thin. The last time he showed paintings was in the '90s, at Patrick Painter gallery in Los Angeles. In the meantime he's been slowly accumulating a trove of work in his studio in Nashville, Tennessee — the city where he grew up. The 7 paintings in his Gagosian exhibition, "Shooters," include large, optically confounding works that he categorizes as "Check" paintings ("something you could imagine a high school kid doing on the cover of his notebook, obsessively, trying to tune out the world"); loosely figurative compositions with backwards-scrawled text (akin to Southern barn graffiti, "made-up languages, caveman text, by some dude who had one finger and couldn't read"); and one relatively subdued abstract work, made by taping down a starburst-shaped pattern on raw canvas, and then moving colored dyes over the surface. "All the paintings are pretty intuitive, pretty base. Even the technique — there's very little... actual skill," Korine laughed. "It's more like a *spirit*." Such self-deprecation is refreshing, but it sells Korine short: the works in "Shooters" are idiosyncratic and exciting, and would be even if you weren't aware that they were made by the same guy who recently directed Selena Gomez.

Just because Korine hasn't exhibited his output with Franconian abandon, it doesn't mean he's

without interdisciplinary ambition. “Since I was a little kid I always wanted to do everything — to make artwork, to write books, to make movies. I wanted them all to come from the same place and have a distinct relationship,” said the artist, who reckons he’s been making paintings for over two decades now — but in a low-key, semi-private way, and often as alternative to the chaos of filmmaking. “The films are seen as a provocation, a lot of the time, and maybe these are a bit more personal,” he said. “Every time I make a film I want it to be the last film I ever make. The process sucks. There’s things I love, but it’s like going to war. I always need to get away from it after — but I’ve still got all the artistic impulses and urges.” That’s lead him to paint, promiscuously — generally with mops rather than brushes, he says, applying pigment onto unstretched canvas on the floor, often using cheap house paint that he’s scored at Goodwill stores. “Six months ago the studio starting looking insane — no space left, art in every direction, hanging from ceilings, on the floor, the walls. It was tripping me out,” Korine said. “My wife said, ‘Let’s let some people see it.’ And then they took pictures, showed them to people. That’s when Larry asked if I wanted to do a show here.”

Korine is casually talking about Gagosian, of course, who would be the second important Larry in his life, the first being Larry Clark, who took a teenage Harmony under his wing and collaborated with him on the seminal urban-youth-doom film “Kids.” Korine credits Clark with giving him an informal art education — and housing him for a while — a cultural induction that made him part of a group that included Christopher Wool, Cady Noland, and others. “He opened my eyes to a lot of stuff,” Korine said. “I got to become good friends with Mike Kelley; [Larry] introduced me to Patrick Painter. That was formative — I dropped out of school and started making artwork. It was a crazy, exciting time in Manhattan.”

Most of that group has now migrated elsewhere, Korine included. He’s only in the city for a few days, for the opening. He skipped the fairs but marveled at MoMA’s Sigmar Polke retrospective, which he dubbed “weirdly the whole history of painting over the past 40 years.” The day after I spoke with him he was due to return to Nashville, where he’s pursuing what he calls a longtime dream: The renovation of a roughly 80,000-square-foot former factory in the city’s center, which he plans to convert into a mixed-use “freak-out zone” with an art collection. It feels a bit strange, in a nice way, to be discussing this within Larry Gagosian’s latest, intentionally alternative outpost. “There’s no real agenda for the place,” Korine said of his unnamed Tennessee venture. “I just want it to be kind of messed up, and completely unmonetizable.”