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Why Harmony Korine Likes Painting More Than Making Movies
With his new movie 'The Beach Bum' out on March 29, it would be easy to overlook a show of the director's 'Young Twitchy' paintings at Gagosian Gallery. Don't make that mistake

Lane Florsheim



SUNSHINE STATE OF MIND Director and artist Harmony Korine in Key Biscayne. "Florida is my favorite place to live," he says. "I like that I can't figure it out." PHOTO: SAM HAYES. COURTESY GAGOSIAN.

The Artist: Harmony Korine has been making artwork for as long as he can remember. "I was always just bored and drawing and trying to entertain myself, and sitting in class messing around," he says. Korine, 46, rose to fame for writing the Larry Clark-directed movie *Kids* in 1995. Today, he's best known for his work as the director of non-linear, oftentimes surreal movies about characters living on the outskirts of society, a la *Spring Breakers* in 2012 and this month's *The Beach Bum*, starring Matthew McConaughey. He's also been exhibiting artwork since 1999, including a solo show at the Centre Pompidou in 2017. While most of his past work has been abstract, the paintings on view now at his latest Gagosian show *Young Twitchy* are, for the most part, decidedly more realistic.



Harmony Korine, 'Twitchy Cosmic,' 2018. Oil on canvas, 60½ x 49⅞ in. © HARMONY KORINE. PHOTO: ROB MCKEEVER. COURTESY GAGOSIAN.

His New Show: A few years ago Korine was having trouble sleeping at night, so he started walking around the area where he lived in Miami, Florida taking hundreds of iPhone photos of boardwalks and piers, glowing pools and empty streets, as well as of his own home. Using different art apps, he'd edit the photos, playing with color and light flares before layering blobby characters from his "Twitchy" universe over the scenes. "Twitchy is just the strange little guy I used to draw in grade school," he says. "It's an almost sci-fi light creature that's always followed me." After about a year of working on the iPhone creations, Korine started to experiment with painting the series, analog style, by projecting the Twitchy images onto canvas and remaking them with oil paints.



Harmony Korine, 'Twitchy Rose,' 2018. Oil on canvas, 60½ x 48 inches. PHOTO: © HARMONY KORINE. PHOTO: ROB MCKEEVER. COURTESY GAGOSIAN.

The paintings, like Korine's recent movies, are steeped in color and his version of humor. "There are people who look at them and see this whole other side that's darker than I'd ever imagined," he says. "I always felt like they were more like screwball comedy. They're always falling, sleeping, dancing. They only come out when no one's around." Characters in the Twitchy universe include Big Twitchy, Twitchy Slingshot Boy and Twitchy Cosmic, a canine creature, and all are featured in the new show.

His Relationship to Technology: Though he's never had social media, Korine likes the "randomness and happenstance and utility" of playing around on the apps he uses to make his art. "I feel like my phone is more of a tool, a musical instrument," he says. "I don't think it's an end product."



Harmony Korine, 'Twitchy Slingshot Boy,' 2018. Oil on canvas, 60 x 48½ in. © HARMONY KORINE. PHOTO: ROB MCKEEVER. COURTESY GAGOSIAN.

His Reading List: Korine counts Milton Berle's Private Joke File, Ripley's Believe It or Not! and M'Hashish by Mohammed Mrabet among the books that have shaped him, as well as the phone book. The phone book? "The Yellow Pages are the greatest, you know?" he says. "I haven't seen one since I was a kid, but I used to just stare at the Yellow Pages. Those were some of the best days of my life."

His Rituals: "I like Cheerwine, have you ever had that?" Korine says when asked if he has a favorite studio tool. "It's a kind of soda. I put it in a big mug, and I swear if I have Cheerwine and a Doritos Locos taco shell at Taco Bell, I get super tweaked and I just start making these Twitchy paintings for days on end. I paint in baseball cleats and batting gloves, then smoke cigars and sometimes turn the heat up really hot, make sure I'm wearing a turtleneck. It just puts me in the right soup."



Harmony Korine, 'Twitchy Tiles,' 2018. Oil on canvas, 60½ x 48¾ in. © HARMONY KORINE. PHOTO: ROB MCKEEVER. COURTESY GAGOSIAN.

His Day Job: Korine says painting is “so much nicer” than making movies. “It’s a much better experience in that I can be alone and make art,” he says. “I still love films, but it’s sometimes difficult with the amount of people involved. Definitely artwork has become more of a focus. I love being in the studio.”

His Happy Place: He recently outfitted his boat in Key Largo, Florida with poker machines. “I like sitting out there, staring at the sunset,” he says. “Florida is my favorite place to live. I like that I can’t figure it out. I like that it’s always sunny, and the way the skies look. For me, it’s just the best place.”