

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021 nightgallery.ca

PAUL HEYER

Blue Boy

June 1 – July 13, 2019

Night Gallery is pleased to present *Blue Boy*, a solo exhibition of new work by the Chicago-based artist Paul Heyer. This is Heyer's fourth solo exhibition at Night Gallery.

This new body of work conjures a futuristic goth fantasy, both playful and spiritual. Skeletons beckon, trees grow luminous blue apples, and strangers' hands join to form butterfly shapes. Some of the paintings are interrupted by large floating circles, holes in the depicted reality.

Sensually seductive, these works question our divorce from each other and the natural world in this increasingly algorithm-driven time. We are living in transitory moment when humans will either start to perish or float into the realm of demi-gods (or both). Heyer's recent paintings consciously perch on that edge, both recalling the history of culture that makes us human and positing a future of looking back at our planet.

Named after Thomas Gainsborough's famous painting "Blue Boy" (a few miles away at the Huntington Museum), this show consciously embraces Gainsborough's melodramatic portrayal of a subject on the verge of transformation. Just as the boy in Gainsborough's painting will soon become an adult with responsibilities, so must we accept the fate that we have been shaping. And like the shape-shifting subjects of the paintings, the show's title also floats around from reference to reference, be it the Joni Mitchell song, the brand of poppers, or Picasso's blue period. There is even a hustler bar in Berlin called Blue Boy.

This work continues Heyer's investigation into painting's ability to depict the invisible. Referencing artists from Durer to Polke to Kusama, Heyer slams together the intimate and the epic, Disney and dystopia, spiritual and trash. Here, his paintings suggest, we can find a space of transcendence—it is somewhere beyond absurdity, mortality, and the mythologies from which societies are constructed. Heyer's *Blue Boy* is a mischievous but earnest ode to the transformative power of the imagination and the instant of becoming.

Paul Heyer (b. 1982, Chicago) received his MFA from Columbia University in 2009. He has had four solo exhibitions as Night Gallery, and his work has been shown at Chapter NY, New York; Andrea Rosen, New York; Shane Campbell, Chicago; Park View Gallery, Los Angeles; HOME, Manchester, UK; and Rodeo Gallery, Istanbul. His solo exhibition *Chicago Works: Paul Heyer* was on view in Spring 2018 at MCA Chicago, where he had previously been included in group shows. His work has been written about in *Artforum*, *The New York Times* and *FlashArt*. Heyer lives and works in Chicago.