

Mark Joshua Epstein

“Raising the Ceiling by Lowering the Floor”

January 12 - February 18, 2023



Asya Geisberg Gallery is proud to present “Raising the Ceiling by Lowering the Floor,” an exhibition of shaped paintings and works on paper by **Mark Joshua Epstein**. The artist builds and sands fiberglass and resin panels in streamlined shapes resembling Art Deco Miami, or bodily curves and indentations. Epstein’s dimensional and dynamic forms have bold colors framed with gossamer borders, introducing a dance of hard and soft, substantive ideas found within surface and edge, and of grand gestures glossed with dainty detail. Playfully abstract, the pieces contain autobiographical themes that anchor the work in thoughtful conversation with histories of design, furniture, architecture, and painting. The shapes of each new panel are drawn from the influential interior design magazine *NEST* (1997-2004), a publication that highlighted eccentric interiors within intricately designed layouts, which Epstein used as a portal to a more glamorous world while growing up in deep suburbia. Harder to deduce is ornamentation gleaned from abstract curvilinear designs decorating the borders of Medieval Hebrew manuscripts and traditional Jewish paper cutting. These specific identity markers manifest in coded ways in Epstein’s art, enriching it with a multiplicity of interpretations.

Epstein starts his panels by layering fiberglass and resin, resulting in subtly textured imperfections. The artist’s hand dominates the surfaces, painting layers of delicacy and devotion. Motifs and patterns are pulled along a rounded corner seamlessly, and flow continuously between the edges of panels. Tiny brushstrokes deliver an electric charge of patience and toil. The paintings’ borders, configured with diamonds, swirls, triangles, and arches, elevate what is on the fringe. Epstein’s interests in Pattern and Decoration, textiles, and décor - often coded as “female” - can be perceived to be similarly secondary. The artist works with rich, bright colors often inspired by contemporary female abstract painters, such as Lesley Vance, Tauba Auerbach, and Tomma Abts. With such self-awareness, the exhibition probes us to reconsider how an artwork can stake its claim in the long history of abstraction, while positioned outside the mainstream hetero male American canon.

Epstein’s work is *au courant* with the contemporary development of artists who are eager to personalize abstraction and find visual pleasure in the mining of an increasingly complex web of references. His indulgence in an abundance of associations opens his art to further potential interpretations - rather than an endpoint or singular explication - and we are the richer for it.

Work in this exhibition was made with the generous support of The Sam and Adele Golden Foundation for the Arts (New Berlin, NY), as well as the Fine Arts Work Center, (Provincetown, MA).

Mark Joshua Epstein received his MFA from the Slade School of Fine Arts, University College London, UK, and a BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and Tufts University, Boston, MA. Solo and two-person shows include Ortega y Gasset Projects’ Skirt Space (Brooklyn, NY), SPRING/BREAK Art Show (NY, NY), Handwerker Gallery, Ithaca College (Ithaca, NY), NARS Foundation Project Space (Brooklyn, NY), Caustic Coastal (Salford, UK), Vane Gallery (Newcastle, UK), Demo Project (Springfield, IL), Biquini Wax Gallery (Mexico City), Breve (Mexico City), and Brian Morris Gallery (NY, NY). Selected group shows include the Nerman Museum (Overland Park, Kansas), Arlington Arts Center (Arlington, VA), Marquee Projects (Bellport, NY), TSA New York (Brooklyn, NY), Collar Works (Troy, NY), Good Children Gallery (New Orleans, LA), Monaco (St. Louis, MO), Beverly’s (NY, NY), and Des Moines Art Center (Des Moines, IA). Epstein has been an artist-in-residence at Vermont Studio Center, Millay Colony, Jentel Foundation, Macdowell Colony, Saltonstall Foundation, I-Park and the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center, amongst others. His work has appeared in publications such as New American Paintings, Art Maze Magazine, Dovetail and Two Coats of Paint. He is a 2023 Visual Arts Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center, in Provincetown, MA, and lives and works in Ann Arbor, MI.



Mark Joshua Epstein
Rescue Us From Level Headedness, 2022
Acrylic on artist made resin/fiberglass panel
35h x 28w x 2d in



Mark Joshua Epstein
Slowly at First and then All of a Sudden, 2022
Acrylic on artist made resin/fiberglass panel
37.25h x 28.50w x 2d in