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Exhibit | Aaron Fowler: Blessings On Blessings

New York artist Aaron Fowler graces L.A. with his large-scale assemblage paintings

by Alicia Eler Mar 11th, 2016



Aaron Fowler, Installation view at Diane Rosenstein Gallery.

New York-based artist Aaron Fowler is something of a hero. His 11 massive, assemblage paintings are part of *Blessings On Blessings*, his first solo exhibition in Los Angeles at Diane Rosenstein Gallery in Hollywood (exhibition continues through March 12). Each of these pieces is intensely labored over and thorough, crafted from a variety of materials that one might eagerly toss aside and forget. Fowler is a nomadic figure of sorts: a pilgrim, an artist, collagist, master of his multi-layered domain. One very much feels his physical presence throughout these huge installations.



Aaron Fowler, "Win," 2015.

The large-scale assemblage piece "Win", 2015, located in one of the front galleries, is a not-so-subtle nod to the strategies that one must employ in any sort of creative business, particularly the art world. Of the recognizable symbols all over this piece, we see a collaged jersey with the number 95 stitched into it; light-blue colored blue jeans; the text MORE LESS; the word ART carved or spray-painted; Payless bags, now just another element of urban detritus, bulging out. Then we see a yellow-and-black police tape with the words PLAY THE GAME DON'T LET THE GAME PLAY YOU across the painting, eventually making its way to the wall.

Other pieces like "Untitled (One Hundred)", 2015, include an overflowing, beautifully layered faceless pilgrim serving a thankless Thanksgiving while an image of a black woman nods to the viewer, a two-headed-dog roams, and the 100 percent and sunglasses emoji make a pattern across this canvas that is headlined with HARLEM. This is a graceful revisionist writing of white Eurocentric 18th century American heritage, painting a scene that fuses history with the present day.



Aaron Fowler, "Untitled (One Hundred)," 2015.

The collage-heavy, at times junk-art-aesthetic is reminiscent of Noah Purifoy's recent Junk Dada exhibition at LACMA, where detritus is used to create another world all together. Such is the magic that one experiences when standing before an Aaron Fowler assemblage painting – the laboring over each piece here is powerful, an insertion of the artist's body into the work of art, a performance even when it is not meant to be. In a world of increasing digital "connectivity" and subtle gestures produced through screened means, it's vital to experience work that is, by its very nature, incredibly physical, and requires an in-person visit. It is like meditating with others, or attending a church service. Here, the works of art take on a quality of summoning individuals to a collective altar.



Aaron Fowler, "Jelly's Little Girl," 2015.

This sort of more visceral, emotional approach to creating artwork is frequently frowned upon in an art world lined with conceptual crap, Zombie Formalism, and layerings so meta that they lose their meaning in the theoretical jargon through which they are painfully and uninterestingly explained. Fowler's work communicates a vulnerability and honesty that we'll hopefully continue to see more of in art, that comes from the heart rather than just the head.

Aaron Fowler's Blessings on Blessings continues through March 12 at Diane Rosenstein Gallery (831 North Highland Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90038).

Images courtesy of the artist and Diane Rosenstein Gallery.