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Jason H. Lee: GOT 'EM!

Exhibition Date: January 28, 2021 - February 25, 2021

Artist: Jason H. Lee

Crossing Art is pleased to present our first exhibition of 2021: “GOT ‘EM!” by New York-based artist Jason H. Lee. Well-known for his witty interpretations of consumer culture and brand followings, Lee challenges the inaccessibility of art’s narratives by juxtaposing his personal life experiences with broader contemporary issues. While his artwork riffs off of luxury goods and brand-name aesthetics, he seeks to highlight both positive and negative aspects of material possession, while revealing human’s innate nature of selfishness and greed. “GOT ‘EM!” is Lee’s first solo exhibition at Crossing Art, following his participation in two groups shows at the gallery in 2010 and 2019.

Lee’s inspiration for the show came from watching ESPN’s popular miniseries, *The Last Dance*, which became the most viewed documentary ever for the sports programmer. He was fascinated by Michael Jordan’s legacy with the Chicago Bulls and the impact the Air Jordan sneaker has had on fans and the general public alike. The title of the exhibition comes from Nike’s recognizable “GOT ‘EM!” message that buyers receive after purchasing a pair of sneakers. Lee hopes to utilize a familiar and accessible item, such as the Air Jordan, to talk about more complex topics of value, commoditization and possession.

“Andy Warhol chose Campbell Soup cans and Coca-Cola,” Lee explains. “He wasn’t a legendary artist at the time, he just picked regular items that people saw every day and made them his own. People ask me, why are you choosing the Air Jordan? Because Damien Hirst said, if you don’t actually enjoy the work you do, don’t do it. I’m just enjoying my work.” He draws inspiration from Warhol’s interest in American society’s consumerist culture, as well as the photographic silkscreen printing technique that allowed the Pop artist to repeat motifs on a large scale. Lee goes a step further, using the object itself to comment on consumerism in direct and hidden ways.

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Working with paint and stickers on canvas, he immortalizes famous fashion designers and rappers who have collaborated with Jordan Brand, like Virgil Abloh and Travis Scott, as well as Michael Jordan himself. The Air Jordan sneaker is both an artistic medium and a unifying theme for Lee's new works. He uses a brand that has a cult-like following to create portraits that reflect on human's ability to glorify figures and material objects in society, revealing human's desire to possess and obtain power over something. He constructs these massive portraits — some reaching up to 95 inches tall — using hundreds of black dot stickers. He then uses the widely loved and sought-after sneakers to streak paint across the canvas, building up a textural and abstract backdrop to showcase the realistic portraits

The concept behind his work today is that art should be accessible to every viewer. In an increasingly digitized age, the boundaries between art and commodity have blurred. Lee utilizes both the objects and their brand imagery to create artworks that stand out from their usual places in the world. Their monumental sizes and almost god-like appearances suggest the extent to which pop culture is dominating all aspects of our lives. At once familiar yet challenging, Lee's artwork gives viewers an opportunity to look beneath the surface and, perhaps, catch a glimpse of themselves.

Artist Bio

Jason H. Lee (b. 1978, Korea) is a New York-based mixed-media artist. Born in Masan, a small city in South Korea, he spent his childhood roaming the country's mountains and fields. He earned a BFA in 2006 from Hongik University in Printmaking, where he learned specific printmaking techniques that inform his work today. As a young artist, he never took to the “deepness” and “cerebral complexities” of the artworks he saw in galleries, and instead gravitated towards an art that was more approachable and accessible. The goal of his work today is to present various perspectives within a simple narrative context. He uses curious and uncharacteristic materials in the creation of his works such as water, fire, matches, trash, recycled goods and hair. His experimental approach to art comes from his experience working with eyewear brand Gentle Monster, producing visuals for Kimmy J's presentation at New York and Seoul Fashion Week, and working as Art Director for brands like FCMM. His work has been exhibited in galleries and art fairs in New York City and internationally.