

**David Leggett**

*Asking for a friend*

September 9 - October 28, 2017

Kimmerich gallery is pleased to present *Asking for a Friend* by David Leggett, his first solo show and second exhibition with the gallery.

*Asking for a Friend* consists of ten midsize square and two circular canvases created this year. Leggett mines pictorial references from the pop culture of his childhood, artifacts of racist Americana and the dredges of the internet for inspiration. The title, *Asking for a Friend*, refers to the way viewers often hedge their questions when asking about the vaguely familiar string of references in his works. In this show, he experiments with bright, largely primary colors in acrylic, spray paint and other craft materials (wiggle eyes, felt). With traces of Ellsworth Kelly's hard-edge and Color Field compositions in the background, Leggett pays attention to the way a canvas commands presence in a room. This is evident as the viewer walks around the gallery's single room: each piece calling her back to look again.

Leggett approaches his artistic project by setting up a series of challenges for himself: how to grapple with the low brow connotation of craft materials, how to paint on a circular canvas, how to appropriate cartoon characters in an engaging way. A more subtle challenge also drives his work: how to put the black figure into painting. He experiments with self-portrait in the cheekily titled *Future Investment* and plays with the recurring figure of a couple. He suggests that when they're together, they can take on the world around them – one of the tenets of internal logic that governs his work. The outline of a black, male face emerges in *In your feelings hold your breath* and is almost entirely whited out in *I just want to feel everything*, an ambivalent gesture towards the possibility of black male presence in painting.

Leggett uses dark humor to express his experience of the contemporary United States. His works explore the creative potential sparked by friction between a familiar figure and a disorienting context. His artistic project investigates what happens when that initial recognition is undone. Strolling between an image of black Bart Simpson and a pumpkin emblazoned *Hood Classic*, the viewer joins the evolving conversation between images and context that informs Leggett's playful and political project.

David Leggett (b. 1980, Springfield, Massachusetts) graduated from the Savannah College of Fine Arts and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

He has been awarded Joan Mitchell Center and Robert Rauschenberg Residency Fellowships and has shown with a range of Chicago galleries. He lives and works in Chicago, but will soon relocate to Los Angeles.