

# Alexander Gray Associates

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Alexander Gray Associates announces representation of Steve Locke (b.1963). Spanning painting, drawing, sculpture, and installation, Locke's practice critically engages with the Western canon to muse on the connections between desire, identity, and violence. Alexander Gray Associates will present two exhibitions of the artist's work in 2022: a Germantown, NY debut in the summer and Locke's first one-person show at the Gallery's New York location later in the fall.

Born in Cleveland, OH in 1963, Locke grew up in Detroit, MI. In 2001, he received his MFA from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Extending his commitment to a painting practice, Locke began to seek alternative ways to amplify public engagement around his art, partnering with institutions, municipalities, and even the US Postal Service to reach new audiences.

Throughout his artistic career, Locke's work has questioned how we ascribe meaning to portraiture. Speaking about the series *when you're a boy...*, which he began in 2005, Locke says that he makes "drawings and paintings that explore relationships between and among men. The exchange of looks, the privilege of looking and the wish to be seen are positions I explore to reveal the ways men respond, desire, and relate to each other."

Other works by Locke imbue portraiture with menace and pain. *#Killers* (2017–present) presents viewers with skillfully rendered portraits of men and women who have killed Black people. These chilling images, in Locke's words, "direct the viewer to the source of this kind of violence against black people. The source is these men and the inchoate, and unnameable whiteness that creates and supports them. ... They are killers adrift in the lie of whiteness."

Locke's *Homage to the Auction Block* (2019–present) interrogates similar themes. Re-envisioning Josef A. Albers's 1950–1976 *Homage to the Square* series, these compositions mark a significant formal departure from the artist's earlier works. Imbuing Albers's reductive imagery with an ominous charge, *Homage to the Auction Block* abstracts a slave auction block to its most basic geometric silhouette—reflecting Locke's belief that "the basic Modernist form is indeed the slave auction block." Queering the pure formalism and color theory of Albers, *Homage to the Auction Block* unpicks the intertwined histories of race and modernism.

Locke's practice ultimately pushes viewers to confront and critically engage with a complicated present and painful past. As he concludes, "If art is anything, it's a public discourse. I'm not making art because I'm trying to express myself or share my feelings with the world because my feelings are no different than anyone else's. I'm not special because I'm an artist. What I can do is I can make people pay attention to things through composition, through color, through scale, through organization through conceptual frameworks. I can make people look at something and think about it."

Steve Locke's work has been the subject of numerous one-person exhibitions, including *in the name of love*, the Gallatin Galleries, New York University, NY (2019); *Three Deliberate Grays for*

*Freddie (A Memorial for Freddie Gray)*, curated by Pieranna Cavalchini, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA (2018); *Love Letter to a Library*, the Boston Public Library, MA (2018); *The School of Love*, Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington, MA (2018); *there is no one left to blame*, curated by Helen Molesworth, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2013), traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, MI (2014); and *Rapture*, curated by Erin Dziedzic, the Hall Street Gallery, Savannah College of Art and Design, GA (2008). He has also participated in a multitude of group exhibitions, including *Feedback*, curated by Helen Molesworth, The School, Jack Shainman Gallery, Kinderhook, NY (2021); *The BIG Picture: Giant Photographs and Powerful Portfolios*, the Fitchburg Art Museum, MA (2020); *Recruiting for Utopia: Print and the Imagination*, the Fruitlands Museum, Harvard, MA (2020); *Coded*, curated by Alexandria Smith, the Mills Gallery, the Boston Center for the Arts, MA (2018); *Nine Moments for Now*, curated by Dell Marie Hamilton, the Cooper Gallery, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2018); *Gay*, curated by Ivan Monforte, the Longwood Art Gallery, the Bronx Council of the Arts, NY (2014); *Paint Things: Beyond the Stretcher*, curated by Evan Garza and Dina Deitsch, the deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA (2013); and *Making a Mark*, curated by Helen Shlien, the Danforth Museum, Framingham, MA (2002). Locke's work is in the collections of the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, Asheville, NC; the Brooklyn Academy of Music, NY; the Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME; the Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College, Winter Park, FL; the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, MA; the Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, MA; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA; and the Tufts University Art Galleries, Medford, MA. He is the recipient of many grants and awards, including the Guggenheim Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2020), the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2014), the LEF Contemporary Work Fund Grant (2009), and the Art Matters Foundation Award (2007). He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Locke is also represented by LaMontagne Gallery in Boston, MA.