



Left: *Homage to the Auction Block #120a-a public face*, 2022, Acrylic on Claybord, 16 x 16 in (40.6 x 40.6 cm); 17 x 17 x 2 in framed (43.2 x 43.2 x 5.1 cm framed). Right: *Homage to the Auction Block #120b-a private life*, 2022, Acrylic on Claybord, 16 x 16 in (40.6 x 40.6 cm); 17 x 17 x 2 in framed (43.2 x 43.2 x 5.1 cm framed)

Steve Locke: *Homage to the Auction Block*

Germantown: June 10–July 17, 2022

Alexander Gray Associates, Germantown announces Steve Locke's first exhibition with the Gallery, *Homage to the Auction Block*. This focused presentation of the artist's ongoing *Homage to the Auction Block* series revisits Josef A. Albers's pivotal body of the work, *Homage to the Square* (1950–76). Imbuing Albers's iconic compositions with an unsettling charge via the abstracted form of a slave auction block, the exhibition's works explore the intertwined histories of race and modernism.

By centering his paintings around the slave auction block, Locke draws attention to the foundation of modernism—built on the forced economic and cultural contributions of enslaved peoples. "If not for the kidnapping and enslavement of millions of people, you don't have America," the artist notes. "You don't have the Industrial Revolution, you don't have the cotton gin . . . you don't have the growth of the United States without slavery. The use of the 'auction block' motif literally organizes . . . modernist relations around the central symbol of chattel slavery in the Americas."

At the same time, *Homage to the Auction Block* remains a tribute to Albers and his contributions to the contemporary art canon as an artist and educator. The joyously unexpected combinations of pigment in Locke's series—the cool blues and hot pinks, soft peaches and bruised lilacs, and acid greens and deep reds—reprise Albers's project of mapping chromatic interactions. Adapting Albers's color theory, which insists on the ambiguity and conditionality of various hues, Locke's works collapse the distance between these chromatic relationships and sociopolitical

ones to critically reflect on the ongoing legacies of slavery and racial injustice in the United States.

At once a celebratory tribute and painful memorial, *Homage to the Auction Block* speaks to the complexities of modernism. "My deep affection for and exploration of Josef and Anni Albers are catalysts for the work," Locke concludes. "I see the *Homage* series as an affirmation of the promise of modernism and an acknowledgement of the circumstances that made that promise possible."

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 Deutsch, 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). Locke is also represented by LaMontagne Gallery in Boston, MA.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery in New York City and Germantown, NY. Through exhibitions, research, and artist representation, the Gallery spotlights artistic movements and artists active in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Influential in cultural, social, and political spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts, and artistic disciplines. Alexander Gray Associates is an organization committed to anti-racist and feminist principles.

New York: Tuesday–Saturday, 10:30 AM–6:00 PM
Germantown: Friday–Sunday, 12:00 PM–6:00 PM, and by appointment