

CHATEAUSHATTO

JONNY NEGRON
Frieze New York 2020 in absentia

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Jonny Negron has developed a distinct *mise-en-scène* in his work. Picking up from the efficacy and stylistic fluency of comic books and Japanese woodblock printing, Negron's individual works appear as suspended moments, plump with the suggestion of wider narratives but completely contained within themselves.

Negron's scenarios tend to be populated by figures, furnished with foliage and lodged with debris. He depicts moments of physical and symbolic exchange, overlaying socio-political satire with preternatural symbolism.

Tucked into Negron's works are compositional likenesses that delicately and precisely refer to existing caches of visual references. Negron often borrows formal qualities from art historical sources, including Byzantine, Medieval and Renaissance art. These forms mostly find their way in to Negron's work as formal echoes.

In the centerpiece of this presentation, *Rave New World* (2020), Negron maps his own memory of a figure being carried by several others from an underground rave on the edge of Paris on top of Andrea Pisano's bronze composition, *Burial of John the Baptist*, dating from 1330. The one figure in the painting who isn't absorbed by the misfortunes of the collapsed raver continues to dance and assumes the physical gestures and contrapposto configuration of Giovanni da Bologna's *Flying Mercury* (1580).

In *If I Was Your Girlfriend* (2020), Negron builds a scene of intimate exchange between two figures on a color and compositional approach that is lifted from Mark Rothko's *Orange and Red on Red*, completed in 1957, while the interior environment takes cues from the 1980 American neo-noir film *American Gigolo*.

Negron plays with the reverberations that occur in the mind's eye and the incalculable accumulation of resonances that any given encounter with a work of art might set off.

There is often an incongruity at play in Negron's work, as the artist's subjects tend towards the dissolute – sometimes revelrous, sometimes mournful – while the underlying references tend towards esteemed and canonized cultural offerings.

The accoutrement and objects strewn across surfaces of this grouping of paintings are the tropes of a certain kind of nightlife, where a social opulence is set against conditions of financial austerity. In these environments, the possibility of pleasure is never far from the possibility of distress.

It is between these spaces that Negron works: connecting a dizzying lived reality, that is itself enmeshed with fantasy, with the abundant intellectual and sensorial pleasures of art history's accumulations.