

# Keitelman Gallery

## James Brown

This exhibition is meant as a small retrospective of several series emblematic of James Brown's artistic production. They all correspond to his creative project, which consists in rendering the cosmos through painting and, more discretely but just as decisively, through sculpture.

Marked by utopia and a metaphysical aspiration, this project is a way for Brown to try and increasingly match the infiniteness of the universe in which the earth is plunged with the endless possibilities of painting and sculpture. Over the course of history, those two artistic media have already given rise to a thousand and one variations incidentally inherited by each and every new picture or sculpture, since art history too is a constellation – a constellation of emblems, images and names.

Such an endeavor includes questioning the notions of limits and scale, but also of *location*: our position in the world, both as creators and as viewers. Therefore, James Brown's work deals as much with the limits and format of the canvas as with the (lack of) limits of the astral universe, the sky map as we figure it and which is still so incomplete.

Similarly, as far as color is concerned, the palette available to the painter all the more echoes the multiple shades that light, with its physical properties, can reveal to our eyes. Furthermore, the gesture of applying color onto the virgin canvas immediately resonates with all the paintings that have formed part of the history of painting. Here, a brushstroke reminds us of Monet; there, another evokes Bonnard, Soutine or Twombly.

The main concern is the relationship between the infinitely small and the infinitely big – a mere patch of color being in itself a planet –, the scale ratio that characterizes us as human beings, and which James Brown very delicately depicts in his paintings. Those convey the patient work of the artist and hence, reveal their modesty, their craft-like quality rendered through the successive color strokes which eventually combine into an image, as a simple outcome of the work that has been done.

The very spirituality of Brown's practice is thus expressed in the propinquity of all these color patches and hundreds of pencil strokes carefully applied over the canvas, at the pace of a daily ritual. A spirituality

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commonly drawing on eastern philosophies and primitive thinking, like the ones the artist once more came across not long ago, in 2004, during his stay in Oaxaca (Mexico) – a state whose culture still carries on ancestral images.

James Brown's work has been presented in many prestigious galleries, among which Leo Castelli's in New York, Thaddaeus Ropac's in Salzburg, Galerie Lelong and Karsten Greve's. It has also been exhibited in relevant events such as the Venice Biennale (1984).

Several of his works have been included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum and the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, the Tamayo Museum in Mexico City, as well as in a number of private collections.

James Brown was born in 1951 in Los Angeles. He lives and works in France and Mexico.