

MODERNISM

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Gallery Exhibition Schedule

Shawn HUCKINS

FOOL'S GOLD

JULY 11 – SEPTEMBER 8, 2018

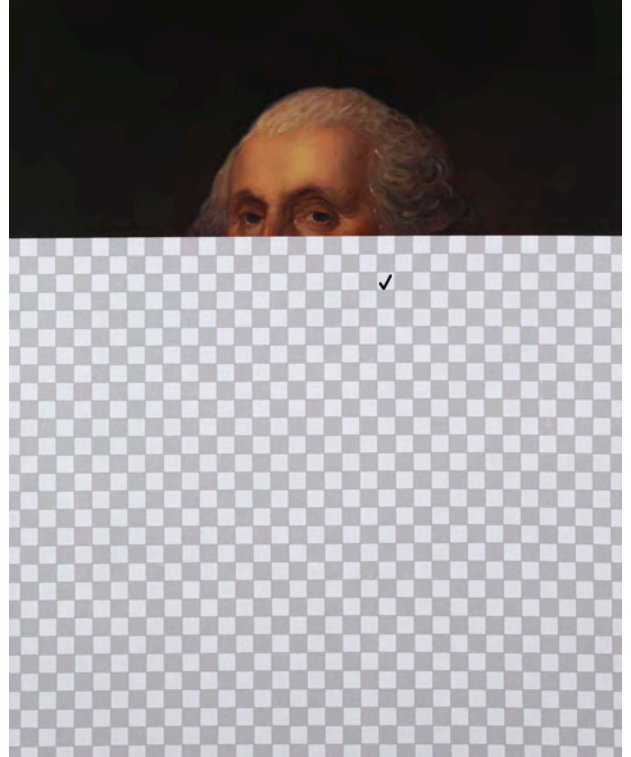
Since construction was completed in 1800, the White House has served not only as home to each successive US President, but also as a repository of American history, preserved in portraits and landscapes collected by the White House Historical Association. The collection contains iconic works ranging from Gilbert Stewart's famous portrayals of George Washington to Albert Bierstadt's epic scenes of the American frontier. For the contemporary American artist Shawn Huckins, who straddles the divide between traditional figurative painting and bleeding-edge digital culture, the archive is a provocation to consider how the past is treated today and how history might be remembered in the future.

The eighteen paintings in *Fool's Gold*, Huckins' second solo exhibition at Modernism, mash up past and present by imagining masterpieces in the White House collection to be as ephemeral as Adobe Photoshop files. Meticulously repainting works by Stewart and Bierstadt, as well as Charles Wilson Peale and William Merritt Chase, Huckins 'updates' them by simulating digital erasures: The artist selectively replaces portions with patches of gray-and-white checkerboard identical to the pattern that Photoshop users see when they delete sections of digital photos.

"The underlying works chosen for this series originally served as testaments of those who came before us and the indelible mark they left on the world," Huckins explains. "In an era where the internet makes everyone a publisher, and digital editing tools bestow the power to create realities out of pixels, these works examine our assumptions regarding the longevity of individual influence and institutions".

For instance, in *Nothing Rhymes With Orange (George Washington, Erasure No. 5)*, Huckins has excised George Washington up to his eyes. Evoking the crisp visual language of Minimalism, the perfect square made by his deletion contrasts with the sweeping scribbles of erasure defacing Bierstadt's epic *Rocky Mountain Landscape* in *The Most Beautiful Place Is Far From Here (Rocky Mountain Scene, Erasure No. 16)*. The latter may be interpreted alternately as a nod to the loose brushwork of Abstract Expressionism or as a reference to the calligraphic marks of graffiti art.

Huckins crafts these paintings entirely by hand in acrylic on canvas, working from archival images stored on the White House Historical Association website. He uses techniques perfected in his last series, exhibited at



Nothing Rhymes with Orange (George Washington, Erasure No. 5), 2018, acrylic on canvas, 32 x 26"

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The Most Beautiful Place Is Far From Here (Rocky Mountain Scene, Erasure No. 16), 2018, acrylic on canvas, 62 x 96 inches

Modernism in 2016, which juxtaposed classic American paintings with textual overlays harvested from Twitter. (For example, George Caleb Bingham's 1847 *Raftsmen Playing Cards* is overwritten with the words EVERYTHING IS HILARIOUS N NTHING IS REAL.)

Writing about Huckins' previous series in *Art Ltd.*, the critic Michael Paglia has observed that "the refined sensibility of the original paintings sets up extreme contrasts to the vulgar world of our own time, which is laid bare by the meanings inherent in the inserted text." Huckins' conceptually-motivated collisions build on Pop Art and the appropriations of Pictures Generation masters such as Richard Prince, and his painterly use of text has earned comparisons to Ed Ruscha.

Refining ideas about technology and historical continuity introduced in his earlier text-based paintings, *Fool's Gold* also represents an important conceptual leap for the artist, opening up a whole new range of questions. "If individual legacy can be expunged, how enduring are the concepts that spawned this country?" asks Huckins. "How will the current day be recorded, judged and preserved when anyone can create, or re-create, his or her own reality with a keystroke, or a mouse-swipe, or a dead-of-night tweet?"

SHAWN HUCKINS (born 1984, Laconia New Hampshire) currently lives and works in Denver, Colorado. His work has been exhibited nationwide.

The public is cordially invited to attend an opening reception on **Wednesday, July 11th**, from 5:30-8PM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL: 415/541-0461 / FAX: 415/541-0425, OR EMAIL TO:
INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM. HI-RES IMAGES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.