

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Benjamin King: ***Simple Mountain***

September 4th - October 5th, 2014

Opening Reception: Saturday, Sept 6th, 7-10pm

There was a long period of searching for a something in color which I then called "a condition of light". It applied to all objects in nature, flowers, trees, people, apples, cows. These all have their certain condition of light, which establishes them to the eye, to each other, and to the understanding.

To understand that clearly go to nature, or to the Museum of Natural History and see the butterflies. Each has its own orange, blue, black; white, yellow, brown, green, and black, all carefully chosen to fit the character of the life going on in that individual entity.

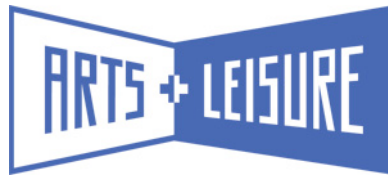
- Arthur Dove, 1930, reprinted in Modern American Painters.

Arts+Leisure is pleased to present its first project with Benjamin King, *Simple Mountain*. This new group of paintings and sculpture, accompanied by a limited edition book of the same title, exemplifies the artist's long-term quest to distill the natural world into its essentials, and thereby create a new way of looking at nature through painting, and according to a new set of rules and codes. Picking up where the symbolist and abstract expressionist Arthur Dove and his peers left off, King explores a very personal landscape and vocabulary which appears to be a result of long hours contemplating nature through his own existential beliefs and philosophy.

King writes:

My process is dependent both on having direct experiences with nature and then recalling those experiences from a point of remove. I'm interested in a cognitive dissonance that arises from this translation. Making this work is like trying to recall a memory where the majority of the visual detail and narrative have been lost or obscured, but for some reason the memory is still there. I am trying to capture that compression of images and sensations retained by the mind. The meaning of the work relies not on one single condition or reading, but on our ability to effortlessly process a confluence of meanings generated by the same piece.

These pictures seem to fail as landscapes, while succeeding as abstractions, yet inextricably remain landscapes. Or maybe they walk a line that removes them from both categories. The physicality of the surface and the cartoon-like simplification of the imagery undermines seeing the work as only a landscape painting. Brushstrokes and textures mimic the feeling of nature more than they literally describe it. It is like there are two separate systems of logic at work in these paintings. One defines it in terms of familiar symbols for nature and the landscape and another abstract logic seems connected to an intuitive sensibility.



The show is at once both uncomplicated and mysterious. He portrays basic elements in nature - rivers, sky, trees, rocks - with fresh eyes but with an ancient sensibility. The work is refreshingly pure and organic and tactile via his use of materials, and in many ways runs crosscurrent against the current fashion of digital and social media. These works seem directed at only one person, rather than millions, yet they are also universal. Whatever truths are inherent in these unique paintings require some careful observation and contemplation on the part of the viewer, similar to the artist's own process. Arts+Leisure invites the public to take part in this meditation this September.

Benjamin King lives and works in New York City. He studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and received his MFA from the University of Chicago. In 1999 in Umbria, Italy he met and studied with artist and professor Nicolas Carone, with whom the notion of art as metaphysical study had a strong effect on the direction of his work.

King's work has been exhibited internationally in galleries including Longhouse Projects, ACME, Galerie Laroche/Joncas, Ridgway Exhibitions, Dvorak Sec and The Painting Center. In 2011 in the Canadian art journal *Border Crossings*, artist-writer-curator Cameron Skene wrote about Benjamin King's work, "King's are deceptively simple paintings, and the comparison to both Phillip Guston and the early-century Arthur Dove is hard to avoid. He's has a sharp eye for the rules of paint, not unlike Dove who said, 'we cannot express the light in nature because we have no sun. We can only express the light we have in ourselves.'" In 2009 in New York City with artist Jay Henderson he formed the roaming curatorial project HKJB. This work has resulted in eight group exhibitions in New York City, Montreal, and Mexico City. HKJB also publishes a blog called HKJBlog with permanent contributors reporting on visual arts in New York City and Los Angeles. HKJB was included in the 2010 Exit Art exhibition and 2012 art history text *Alternative Histories New York Art Spaces 1960-2010*, published by MIT Press. In 2011, King, with artist Rob Nadeau, curated the group exhibition *Snowclones* for Joshua Abelow's ARTBLOGARTBLOG pop-up show series held in Ross Bleckner's Chelsea New York studio.

Please join us on Saturday, September 6th from 7-10pm to celebrate the opening of Benjamin King's *Simple Mountain*. Refreshments will be served. An 80-page full color artist limited edition will be available for purchase as well. For more information please contact nick@artsandleisure.net or call 917-880-7299.