

JULIA MARTIN GALLERY

NOAH SATERSTROM

Shubuta and Other Stories with works by SAMUEL DUNSON

opening reception Friday January 6th, 6-9p
show hangs though February 15th



Painter Noah Saterstrom relocated with his family to Nashville in the last year or so. His newest body of work bravely explores the well-documented history of a prominent slave owning family that inhabits a branch of his family tree. I hesitate to summarize Noah's statement (see attachment) regarding this show. I will say that my heart rate spiked when I laid eyes on his work for the first time. He is by far one of the most prolific, dedicated and inspiring painters I have had the pleasure to work with.

Through events described in greater detail below, Noah's first solo exhibition with us will include a selection of works by painter Samuel Dunson. Dunson is a prominent figure in Nashville's art community and a true painter's painter. Each artist handles material - both studio and ethological - in a way that speaks to the other. In this case, quite literally. This exhibition brings these two accomplished mid-career painters together to participate in groundbreaking visual dialogue. Samuel's piece, a direct response to Noah's "In Times of War", will be revealed on opening night along with a number of collaborative works on paper.



This past Fall I found myself in the kitchen of JMG with Noah Saterstrom and Samuel Dunson engaged in one of the more illuminating conversations of my life. We had just hosted an open discussion for External Ballistics - a show about guns. Sam and Noah each contributed poignant pieces to this exhibition and were meeting for the first time. Their mutual respect for one another's work was obvious as the conversation shifted to issues of race.

Sam Dunson:

"It felt as if this was a perfect opportunity to open up to each other about heritage, family and slavery. Noah let me in on an important aspect of his family history. Noah's distant family owned slaves. Though I would be naïve to think I have never met a person who is the descendant of slave holders, I had never had a real conversation about it. Noah informed us that he had some reservations about showing a particular painting which dealt with his family history. During the conversation, I wanted to let Noah know that many black people do not blame whites for an ancestry they do not have control over. It is the responsibility of the artist to tell his story in his words. In essence, it would be irresponsible not to tell his story."

The painting, titled "In Times of War" is a remarkable post-impressionist rendering of a civil war era story from Noah's family history. It imagines a white woman lying in a yard, breasts engorged post miscarriage, being nursed by puppies brought to her aid by plantation slaves to relieve her from excruciating pain. The family's nurse, Emeline, who

was regarded as “beloved” by the family yet kept as a slave, cares for the woman's toddler son in the background.

I shared an image of the piece with Sam who, like me, was very impressed. Our discussion went on for nearly an hour. Days later I found myself trying to imagine what a visual response from Sam Dunson to the piece might look like. A couple of phone calls later, both artists had enthusiastically agreed to take their discussion to the next level.

Noah Saterstrom:

"Only one or two other people had seen the painting and I expressed nervousness about painting so directly about my ancestors, their connections to slavery, etc. We talked about the hesitation of white folks to discuss these things, and that the silence is more damaging than "getting it wrong" and agreed any conversation is more productive than no conversation."

It is my great honor and privilege to present this opportunity to observe and participate in meaningful and powerful visual communication in conjunction with our first solo exhibition for Noah Saterstrom. Viewers will be invited to sit with these two soulful works of reckoning, brought to life through modern perspectives and gifted hands. It is also my great hope that you leave this exhibition with the same sense of awakesness and inspiration that leads you to go and continue the conversation.

It is also important to mention that Samuel Dunson is currently represented by Rymer Gallery. I am deeply grateful to all involved for recognizing the importance of embracing this exchange and particularly to Sam Dunson for his willingness to make it possible.

"Conversation is the most effective means of breaking down barriers. Prior to conversation, we allow fear, preconception and ignorance to rule our belief of the unknown. Through conversation, we begin to tear down barriers and build bridges. I believe that this was the genesis of our conversation. A quest for knowledge." - Sam Dunson

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JULIA MARTIN GALLERY
444 Humphreys St.
Nashville, TN 37203

Gallery Hours:

Friday Noon - 4:00p

Saturday Noon - 6:00p

Thursdays by appointment

[615-336-7773](tel:615-336-7773)

www.JuliaMartinGallery.com