

Charles Moffett

Sam Bornstein

Variety Lofts

March 12 through April 23, 2022

Opening Reception March 12th, 6-8pm

Charles Moffett is pleased to present *Variety Lofts*, New York-based artist Sam Bornstein's second solo exhibition with the gallery. On view from March 12 through April 23, 2022, this will be the inaugural show at 431 Washington Street, the gallery's new ground floor location in Tribeca.

Variety Lofts presents fifteen paintings in which the artist produces a commingling of memory and reverie; allowing apartments to serve as stages for characters, both fictional and remembered, acting out scenes for the painter to translate onto canvas and linen, a departure from his past emphasis of working on wood panels. In a follow-up to his 2018 solo exhibition, *Daydream Workshop*, Bornstein takes a more personal and introspective approach to his characters and vignettes. Many of the paintings combine autobiographical and imagined-hypothetical sources, resulting in a body of work that blends the diaristic with the surreal. Fluid fields of paint create an atmosphere evocative of a mental space rather than an illusionist one. Like waking from a vivid dream there is a range of sharpness, materiality, and imagination in each work, allowing a viewer to feel a sense of familiarity and comfort, before realizing what is before them is just as much reality as it is illusory.

Raised in a New York City building filled with an extended family of artists, musicians, and filmmakers, Bornstein lived in a home that played host to jazz performances, concerts and more. This combinatory fantasy-logic informs the architecture and emotional distortions of space contained within his paintings. While the Bakhtin term Carnavalesque might describe the humor bordering on absurdity that characterizes his work, Bornstein never experienced the European Carnival. Rather, he was brought up on Vaudeville, the used book district on 18th Street, and the vibrant Downtown music scene of the 1980s and 1990s. A more appropriate adaptation of that literary mode might be what Bornstein has dubbed "the Vaudeville-esque," a form of play that integrates a rotating cast of characters in a multitude of scenes drawing from various sources.

Bornstein's inspiration for *Variety Lofts* can be characterized as a collage and patchwork of sources: Surrealist poetry, modern jazz, alternative venues, Central European painting, Ashkenazi folklore, and psychedelic culture. The myriad influences were in abundance while coming of age in New York, however they were just as pertinent to his life at home from 2020 through early 2022. The result of this variety show of the mind is a mapping of an artistic practice in both present time and one that mines the historical archive of his memory. Redolent of the languid time capsule of the past two years, and his Endless Vacation-like upbringing in Manhattan, the works take on a light and dreamy atmosphere of warm and layered paint. And yet despite their lightness, these are physical paintings realized through a long process of pouring, scraping, spray-painting and exploratory mark-making. Out of a light-filled field of abstraction, the painter finds and inserts people and spaces that float in between brushstrokes, drawing, and chance encounters of media.

Windows and framing re-occur as their own characters, and the artist draws upon his work as an architectural draftsman in New York City and the De Chirico-like view from his childhood home to create highly abstracted scenes that play with the players within. At other times, figures are themselves windows to the outside world. Working with a similar visual language to the spaces and characters in his first show with the gallery, there is an equivocal mix of work and play, but one that has evolved to demonstrate Bornstein's command of his alchemist's approach to painting. As the title suggests, the artist feels, at times, that the players in the works are putting on a kind of show for us, or for the invented world itself.

Sam Bornstein (b. 1983, New York; works in New York. MFA Hunter College 2017, BFA Bard College 2005.) Bornstein's layered figurative paintings evoke an invented world that mirror contemporary life and personal narratives through the filter of the imagined. In alternately luminous and muted light, a variety of characters from New York City, folklore, media, and the collective imaginary coexist in scenes that are familiar, yet resist closed readings. Often portraying multiple figures involved in ambiguous tasks, work, or leisure, his works play with perception of reality and dream states, creating a sense of familiarity that requires the viewer to apply their own experiences in order to complete the narrative. The paintings' tension of material and image often refer back to the act of painting, and recall Postwar and Modernist painters from Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe.