

THE ARMORY SHOW

Jay Sanders discusses Artists Space's 2023 Armory Spotlight Presentation featuring Drake Carr

Interview



Photography Credit Drake Carr draws Ethan James Green for *Walk-ins*, New York Life Gallery, 2023. Photo by Jan Carlos Diaz. Courtesy of the artist.

Armory Spotlight honors a New York cultural institution with a complimentary booth at the fair, further expanding The Armory Show's longstanding Cultural Partners Program.

Artists Space will present Housecalls, live drawing sessions by New York-based artist Drake Carr that unfold within an ever-changing installation.

For Housecalls, Carr will invite individuals to pose for portraits, drawn onsite and within the booth. Housecalls extends Carr's practice of commissioned portraits made by appointment in patrons' homes. This portraiture performance will unfold over the duration of The Armory Show, and visitors will witness the artist at work in an atelier-like setting. Carr will explore the performative nature of his practice, inviting the subject, artist, and onlookers to participate in a theatrical experience that extends beyond the booth.

Carr will alter the booth's decor to echo each subject's own home, allowing the sitter to both look and feel more "at home" amidst the swarming energy and complexity of the art fair. The booth's architecture will both reveal and conceal the activity within, offering privacy to the portrait session while encouraging visitors to peer into a partially concealed drawing room.

Read our interview with Jay Sanders, Director of Artists Space, below.



Image courtesy of Artists Space, New York.

Artists Space is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2023, the same year it is showcasing at The Armory Show through Armory Spotlight. In that time, the organization has become an integral part of the cultural landscape, especially in New York. How do you see Artists Space continuing its legacy for the next five decades and beyond?

It's certainly been poignant to reach this milestone. At its best, Artists Space is wholeheartedly reckoning with the complexities of the present in deep collaboration with artists, and legacy then becomes the episodic vestiges of that ongoing attentiveness. The optimistic answer is, if we're doing our job, we will continue to fundamentally evolve to support artists as they articulate and provoke within their own time, probably in ways we could never imagine.

In addition to supporting emerging artists, part of Artists Space's mission is to shed light on social and intellectual concerns that inform artistic practice. Since its founding, how have those concerns evolved, and how has the organization's programming evolved in response?

From the outset, Artists Space exhibitions and events have challenged dominant art world paradigms, worked across diverse artist communities, and throughout the decades, kept pace with our city's shifting needs. In the 1980s, for example, Artists Space widened its scope at a time when the art world lacked a global purview, with presentations from Cuba, South Korea, Scotland, Canada, and Japan, among others. At the end of the '80s, as artists focused on institutional critique and identity politics, we took political stances, most infamously with the historic 1989 exhibition about the influence of AIDS, *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing*, curated by Nan Goldin. Throughout the next two decades, we continued to foreground under-recognized artists, serve as an incubator for new curators, and prioritize first-time exposure for critically-minded practitioners. With the move to 11 Cortlandt Alley in 2019, we were recently able to transform our lower level into a venue for performance and durational art at a time when the pandemic and cost-of-living have curtailed the vitality and pervasiveness of live art in NYC. Now, our upcoming exhibitions expose legacies of colonization, address processes of historical exclusion, and bring fresh, critical thought to underknown historical practitioners.



Drake Carr, *Angelo and Ryan*, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist and Artists Space, New York.

The presentation of Drake Carr at the fair in September promises to be a special one that really activates the space. Could you describe the vision for your presentation and what visitors may expect?

It's important to us that artists have the agency to define their own parameters. I know Drake is still very actively designing this project, with context being top of mind. It will be a series of commissioned portraits rendered in situ at The Armory Show. Live drawing is something Drake has done before, as he did during his *Walk-ins* residency and exhibition at New York Life gallery last winter. Such an undertaking is both performative and real, so I'm anticipating quite an active scenario. Drake is actively thinking about how the live drawings and the works we install in advance will relate, and we're hopeful that this project actually spills outside the booth and intervenes more broadly into the fair's architecture.

When did you first encounter Drake Carr? What drew you to his work?

I first saw *Manifestations*, a show and environment that Drake created with frequent collaborator Pvsyheaven at Brooklyn's Happyfun Hideaway bar in 2021. They made fantastically beautiful lifesize cutout figure paintings to further populate what is already a dynamic New York social space. At the time, this show was uniquely addressing intimacy in relation to Covid. Now, two years later, Drake and Pvsyheaven actually just opened their second installation at the bar, entitled *Formal Occasion*. Definitely visit!

How does Carr's practice reflect or advance Artists Space's mission?

Our main function is offering our resources to artists so, when The Armory approached us with this opportunity, we immediately wanted to spotlight an artist whose practice we felt deserved a wider audience. Drake employs a deft understanding of the history and stylistics of portraiture to really contend with the present — style, fashion, social configurations, and other modalities — and situates his work across many different contexts in quite interesting ways.

We're appreciative that The Armory Show has supported us in offering this platform to a fantastic early-career artist. Drake's reflexive practice carries an awareness of what, where, and how it's viewed, which will surely make for a thoughtfully sharp presentation that reflects some of the particularities of The Armory Show back onto itself.



Yasunao Tone: *Region of Paramedia*. Installation view, Artists Space, 2023. Image courtesy Artists Space, New York. Photo: Filip Wolak



Drake Carr, *Thora*, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist and Artists Space, New York.