



MARCUS LESLIE SINGLETON

## MARCUS LESLIE SINGLETON

Born 1990, Seattle

Lives and works in Brooklyn

### Education

2012 Seattle Art Institute

2010 South Puget Sound Community College, Olympia, Washington

### Solo Exhibitions

2020 *I Was Tempted To Throw My Phone In The River*, Steve Turner, Los Angeles  
SPRING/BREAK Art Show (with SKAVO Gallery), New York

2019 *Circusland*, TURN Gallery, New York

2018 *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, Medium Tings, Brooklyn

2013 C Art Gallery, Seattle

### Group Exhibitions

2020 *MEANWHILE*, Brilliant Champions Gallery, Brooklyn  
*Celebrate Longevity*, Superposition Gallery, Amagansett, New York  
Frieze Los Angeles (with Superposition Gallery)

2019 *Infinity in a Tiny Room*, SCAVO Gallery, Brooklyn  
*The Second Head*, Office & Gallery, Los Angeles

2018 Dakar Biennale, Senegal  
Brilliant Champions Gallery, Brooklyn

2017 Sincerely Tommy, Brooklyn

2016 Open Space Gallery Show, New York

2015 *Afrofuturism*, The New School, New York

2014 University of Washington Artist Group Show, Seattle

2013 Seattle African Art Fair (with C Art Gallery)

### Bibliography

2020 Fontaine, Pearl. "Marcus Leslie Singleton Captures Life's "In-Between" Moments," *Whitewall*, April 3

2019 Saltonstall, Gus. "Independent Art Show To Premier In Crown Heights Apartment," *Patch*, May 28

# SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

# STEVE TURNER



Marcus Leslie Singleton: *I Was Tempted To Throw My Phone In The River*  
October 17–November 14, 2020

Steve Turner is pleased to present *I Was Tempted To Throw My Phone In The River*, a solo exhibition by New York-based Marcus Leslie Singleton that features paintings which depict life's routine moments—fishing, driving a car, having a conversation, smoking a cigarette or just hanging out. As a group, they represent Singleton's appreciation of and longing for the return of face to face interactions. His painting style, refined through trial and error over the last decade, has congealed into a recognizable visual language of simplified figures and forms in contrasting colors painted with lively brushstrokes. He conveys his life, his inner spirit, his imagination, his longings and his fears.

According to Singleton, with these works he aims to convey the preciousness of life by celebrating Black life, culture, music, folklore, religion and tradition. "I have tried to produce a language that captures our deepest essence, one that for a large part of our history has been misunderstood. As a Black man in this country, I feel obligated to say that we are real people and that the souls of Black folks must be better recognized, by us and by others. I hope that my paintings can contribute in a way so that people from all walks of life will connect and empathize, not driven by guilt or shame, but by truthfulness and honesty."

Marcus Leslie Singleton (born 1990, Seattle) is a self-taught artist who moved from Seattle to New York in 2013 to develop his studio practice. He has had solo exhibitions at Medium Tings, Brooklyn (2018); Turn Gallery, New York (2019) and Journal Gallery, New York (2020). This is his first exhibition with Steve Turner, Los Angeles.



*I Was Tempted To Throw My Phone In The River*. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



*I Was Tempted To Throw My Phone In The River*. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



*I Was Tempted To Throw My Phone In The River*. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



*I Was Tempted To Throw My Phone In The River*. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



SPRING/BREAK Art Show (with SKAVO Gallery). Installation view, New York, 2020



SPRING/BREAK Art Show (with SKAVO Gallery). Installation view, New York, 2020



Circusland. Installation view, TURN Gallery, New York, 2019



Circusland. Installation view, TURN Gallery, New York, 2019



Circusland. Installation view, TURN Gallery, New York, 2019



*Infinity in a Tiny Room*. Installation view, SCAVO Gallery, Brooklyn, 2019



*Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*. Installation view, Medium Tings, Brooklyn, 2018



*Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*. Installation view, Medium Tings, Brooklyn, 2018

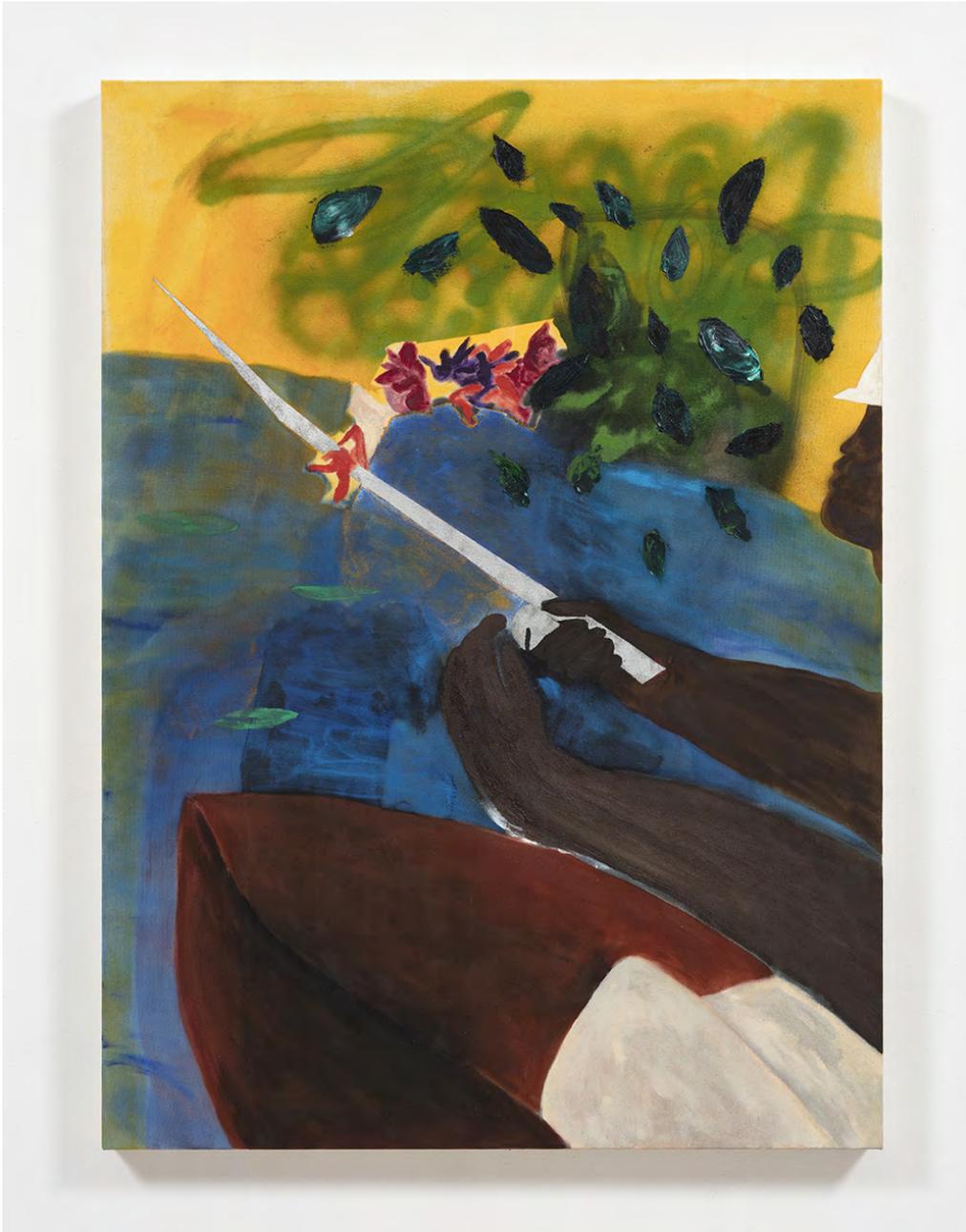


*Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*. Installation view, Medium Tings, Brooklyn, 2018

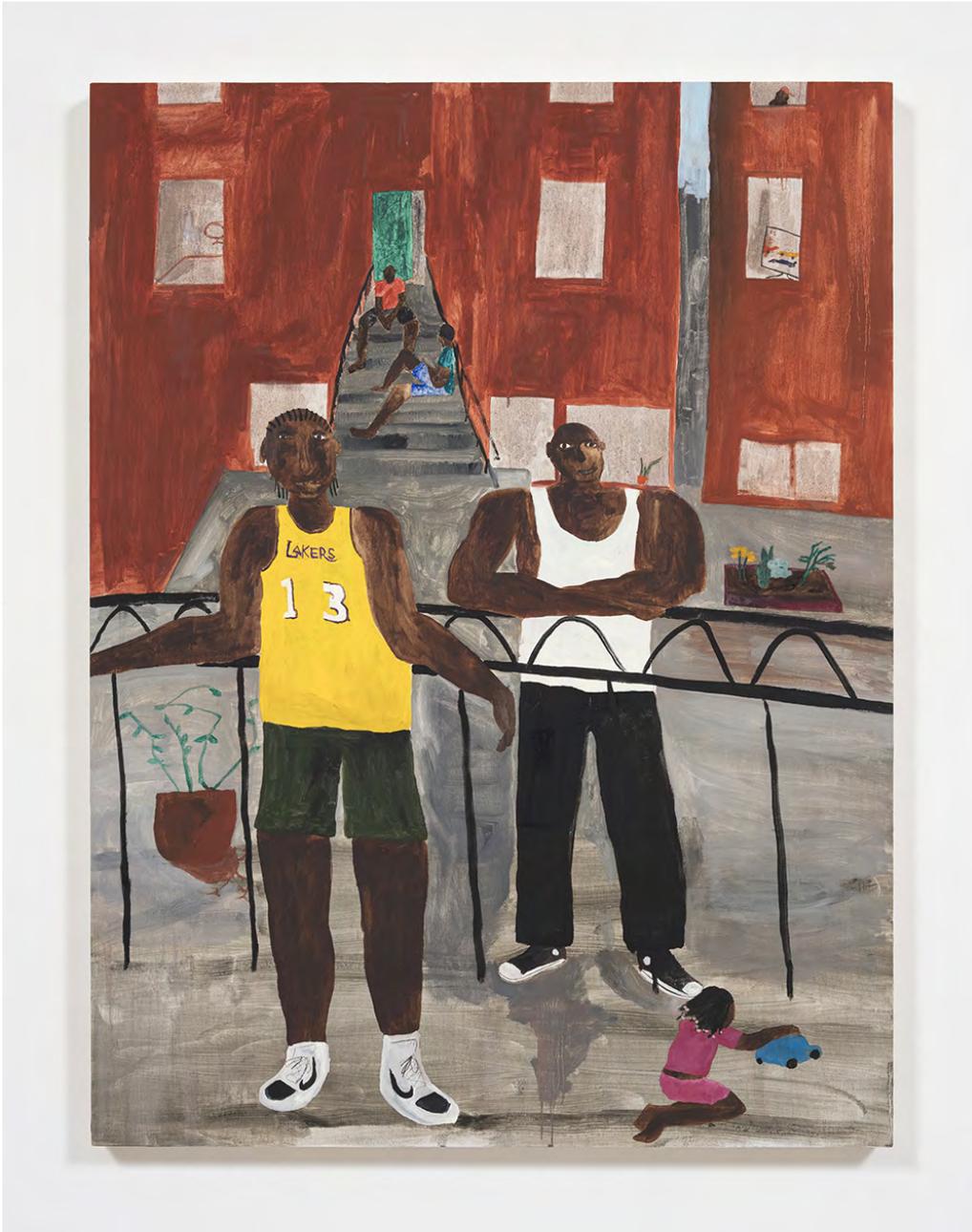


*Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*. Installation view, Medium Tings, Brooklyn, 2018

# SELECTED WORKS



*Bayaguana*, 2020  
Oil and spray paint on linen  
48 x 35 inches (121.9 x 88.9 cm)



*Bergen St.*, 2020  
Oil on wood panel  
40 x 30 inches (101.6 x 76.2 cm)



*Divani & Maykel, 2020*  
Oil on wood panel  
8 x 6 inches (20.3 x 15.2 cm)



*Mango Tree*, 2020  
Oil on canvas  
7 x 5 inches (17.8 x 12.7 cm)



*Our Loving Ancestors*, 2020  
Oil and spray paint on linen  
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



*Protesters, Eastern Parkway, 2020*  
Acrylic and oil stick on paper  
6 x 4 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 1 inches (15.2 x 11.4 x 2.5 cm)



*That's Six Bro Pt. II, 2020*  
Acrylic, oil stick and wax on paper  
9 x 11 inches (22.9 x 27.9 cm)



*The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, 2020*  
Acrylic on wood panel  
12 x 12 inches (30.5 x 30.5 cm)



*"WATCH OUT PIGEONS"*, 2020  
Acrylic on wood panel  
12 x 12 inches (30.5 x 30.5 cm)



*Wire Winged Saint*, 2020  
Oil and spray paint on canvas  
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



*Acrobats On A Lunchbreak*, 2019  
Oil and spray paint on canvas  
36 x 36 inches (91.4 x 91.4 cm)



*Ancestors*, 2019  
Acrylic, oil stick and wax on paper  
9 x 11 inches (22.9 x 27.9 cm)



*Man Thinking About Smiling*, 2019  
Oil stick and pencil on paper  
6 x 4 1/2 inches (15.2 x 11.4 cm)



*Nothing To Lose*, 2019  
Acrylic and spray paint on canvas  
48 x 36 inches (121.9 x 91.4 cm)



*Rua do Vale de Santo*, 2019  
Oil and spray paint on linen  
60 x 48 inches (152.4 x 121.9 cm)



*Serving*, 2019  
Oil on wood panel  
24 x 18 inches (61 x 45.7 cm)



*Getting Ready*, 2018  
Acrylic and watercolor on paper  
18 x 24 inches (45.7 x 61 cm)



*Man Smoking*, 2018  
Acrylic, watercolor and pastel on paper  
8 x 6 inches (20.3 x 15.2 cm)



*Saturdays*, 2018  
Watercolor on paper  
50 x 30 inches (127 x 76.2 cm)



*Man Fishing*, 2016  
Oil, oil stick and pastel on wood panel  
43 x 38 inches (109.2 x 96.5 cm)



*Ballet Dancer No. 4*, 2015  
Watercolor on paper  
11 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 9 inches (28.6 x 22.9 cm)

SELECTED PRESS

## Marcus Leslie Singleton Captures Life's “In-Between” Moments

Pearl Fontaine | April 3, 2020



In March, we visited the SPRING/BREAK art show, where we first met artist Marcus Leslie Singleton. His show “Up Trying to Remember a Dream,” curated Lizzie Renfrew Vogt, caught our eye as a quiet oasis of familiarity situated amid the visual frenzy of the fair.

Fashioned after a bedroom, an intimate space was filled with natural light, potted plants, and a cushion-covered window seat. It created a homey *mise-en-scene* for the artist's paintings of the mundane “in-between” moments of everyday life—like the title work, which depicts a figure sitting at the edge of a bed, or *Expect Delays*, in which a girl waits at a bus stop. With flat, visible brush strokes and a saturated palette, Singleton's work may appear friendly and relatable at a first glance, but a certain evocative nostalgia ensures that you'll want to take a second, more thorough look.

A self-taught artist, Singleton left his home state of Washington to pursue his artistic career. His practice questions the process of identity building and black consciousness. Recently, *Whitewall* caught up with the Brooklyn-based artist to discuss “Up Trying to Remember a Dream,” and to see how he's doing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**WHITEWALL:** We recently saw your installation “Up Trying to Remember a Dream” at SPRING/BREAK. Can you tell us a bit about this presentation?

**MARCUS LESLIE SINGLETON:** The theme of the SPRING/BREAK 2020 was “in excess.” The curator, Lizzie Renfrew Vogt, and I wanted to create a space to step away from that. We wanted to invite viewers to cross a threshold away from autopilot consumption towards a place of pause and reflection.

People really responded to the space, saying it felt like a sanctuary. The show was a mix of pieces that capture the way we perform socially and ones that were about the solitary moments when we make sense of those interactions. We took the title of the show from that particular piece because it characterizes that liminal space between private and public life. It has elements of the romanticized and the real, between sleep and wake, when you’re alone and sifting through memories and dreams.



**WW:** As a self-taught artist, how did your relationship with art begin, and how did your career unfold?

**MLS:** I started painting when I was 21. When I was a teenager, I played guitar in a punk rock band. It was cool, I loved it, but I was still searching for something. I didn’t know what I was searching for.

I got into making clothes and textiles and enrolled in fashion school. It only took two months of that to know it wasn’t for me. I couldn’t communicate my thoughts through fashion. I dropped out and went to an art supply store and got a canvas just to try it out. The first painting I ever made was an oil painting. I found a way to communicate without barriers. Painting gave me a voice for my inner thoughts.

I was working in a shoe store in Seattle, making art in my free time. My mom encouraged me to keep it up. She thought I could do it. That helped me think, “Ok this could be

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something I could make a career out of.” She used to make ceramics with this guy, Eric Salisbury—one of my first inspirations and mentors—and my Dad also used to paint.

When I moved to New York, before I started teaching, I was working restaurant jobs. I got fired from every single one of them. I was trying to be a server; I’d always mess up people’s orders and I was too slow. I wasn’t good. One day my manager told me, “You’re too artistic, you shouldn’t be working at restaurants, you make too many mistakes, find a different job.” I still remember everything about that moment. I thought I could just move out here and start making art like it was the ‘80s. It took longer than I expected it to—like six years longer than I expected it to—and now things are beginning to pay off.



**WW:** Your paintings often capture life’s mundane “in-between” moments. Why are you drawn to these?

**MLS:** Those are real moments that everybody has. Everybody can realize those times whether it’s brushing your teeth, or talking on the phone, or getting into an argument... normal things—things I’ve lived through, and that stuck with me. When I have memories like that, it’s a good reason to make a painting.

**WW: In your practice, you examine the process of identity building. What are some things you've learned through art regarding your personal identity?**

**MLS:** I've learned how I look at the world. I've learned how I respond to the world. Whether it's in a bank, or in an intimate setting with a lover, or in a club, or at a party or in a store. To make great paintings you have to be vulnerable. You just have to put it out there.

**WW: The current global circumstances caused by COVID-19 are making things pretty uncertain, especially for those in the art community. How are you doing amid the chaos?**

**MLS:** The situation is terrible. Personally, I'm doing alright. I'm lucky because I can work from home or my studio. The solitude part doesn't bother me. I've always made art alone, so my practice hasn't changed, it's always been reclusive. But it does feel different when it's government-mandated alone time. Moving forward I'm going to just spend more time creating and less time worrying about trivial bull shit.

Last year I had to stay in my room for six months altogether because I ruptured my Achilles tendon, twice. So, I've been spending a lot of time inside recently, but it's granted me the ability to truly know myself better and it's reshaped my view and how I see the world.

**WW: In a situation like this, where the entire planet is impacted, what would you say the role of the artist is?**

**MLS:** The role of the artist is always to be an artist—keep making, keep creating. The need for beauty and love and assurance is always there, right now it's amplified. You have to maintain a sense of self even though things are wildly fucked up and unpredictable right now. You have to do it, because that's really what's going to help other people—if you do it successfully, you'll make work that resonates. People respond to your truth.

