

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Coalescence, an exhibition of new paintings by Delfin Finley, on view in Los Angeles at 5130 W. Edgewood Pl. from May 13 through June 16, 2023. An opening reception will be held on Friday, May 12 from 6 to 8 PM.

Finley explores ideas of representation in painting, posing questions not only about who gets represented, but also about how and at what scale. The figures featured in Finley's paintings, typically friends, family, or the artist himself, exhibit a photo-realist quality, a mark of the artist's skillful depiction of highlights, depth of color, and shadow that harkens back to the Old Masters. In Coalescence, the artist exhibits a portrait series that has developed over the course of several years in an effort to distill and illustrate the weighted experience of Black and Brown people in the United States.

Each figure in the series is draped with a layered assortment of red, white, and blue rope that is carried, repositioned, and held in a way that feels natural or instinctual to the subject at that moment in time. Although the idea of weight carried may seem abstract, Finley's work deftly portrays its physical manifestation in the figures' posture, hand gestures, stance, and overall expression which help represent and honor the multi-perspectivity held within the Black American story.

In one recent large painting, Oak (2022), a figure is seen elevating two strands above his shoulders, mimicking a strung-up doll or marionette, a signal of the performative elements that are present in the paintings, but also of the importance of performance in daily life. Contrary to the normal functions of a marionette, the figure is seen manipulating his own strings, rather than being controlled by a puppeteer. Finley tends toward a larger scale canvas, underscoring and valorizing each unique character and capturing moments of reflection, introspection, defiance, and rumination that could only be depicted by a painter with as much technical skill.

Finley's delicate portrayal of balance carries throughout the exhibition. In 2 Up 2 Down (2022), a man can be seen repositioning, and otherwise trying to manage, the heavy tangled material. The stark white background forces the viewer to focus on the subject who appears to be displaying a high level of focus and concentration on the task at hand. Finley prompts the viewer to question whether the subject is putting down his ropes in resignation or picking them up in defiance, a dichotomy that pervades every action and subtle movement that people of color make. Continuing the theme of dichotomy, the largest painting in the exhibition, Regalia (2022), features a figure standing prominently with the rope draped atop her like a gown. The juxtaposition of the gown-like ropes with her utilitarian garments evokes a sense of empowerment and comfort with the weight that she carries.

In both examples, as in all of the paintings in Coalescence, the rope featured is not coarse, but soft with a velvet-like texture: A signal of something that has been worked and reworked, honed and polished over generations. By presenting this collection of eleven portraits together, Finley establishes a distinct vocabulary and simultaneously provides the viewer a narrative context for which the paintings can exist. Coalescence is equally a reference to the amalgamation of these paintings and a reference to the individual elements present within each composition. The rope, for example, consists of a collection of twine that, when bound together, form a thicker, heavier material. In this way, each strand of twine acts as a stand-in for a single lived—or generationally passed down—memory. This coming together of twine or rope also speaks to the importance of context; that each individual event is the result of a circumstantial history—personal, national, or otherwise.

Delfin Finley (b. 1994, Los Angeles) has been the subject of a solo exhibition at Lora Schlesinger Gallery in 2017, Santa Monica, California. Group exhibitions include Coming of Age, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2022); Shattered Glass, Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); Something About Us, Anthony Gallery, Chicago (2021);

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Really?, Wilding Cran Gallery, Los Angeles (2017); Make Their Gold Teeth Ache, Moberg Gallery, Des Moines, Iowa (2015); and Manifest Justice Pop-up, Los Angeles (2015). Finley lives and works in Los Angeles.