

Chiaverina, John, "In the Studio with Jason Fox," *Independenthq.com*, April 24, 2026

INDEPENDENT

IN THE STUDIO WITH JASON FOX

by John Chiaverina

April 24, 2026



Jason Fox, *Demigod* (detail), 2024, acrylic, oil, and pencil on canvas, 18 x 24 x 5/8 inches. Photography by Dario Lasagni. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.

For four decades, Jason Fox has been producing figurative paintings that, through the will of the artist's imagination, transcend the novelty of their pop-y subject matter into a more capacious art historical timeline. In Fox's paintings, the visages of Barack Obama and Bob Marley merge in a cubist scramble; an archangel-like figure crosses into a strip mall while staring at an iPhone; and a scantily clad man in a trenchcoat and a Jason's hockey mask disrupts what would otherwise be a lovely day at the park.

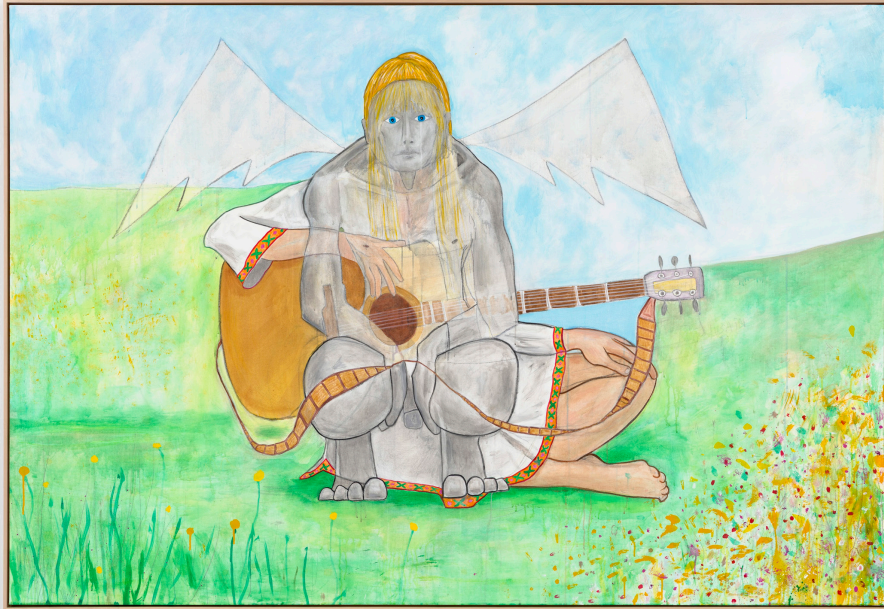
The latter is taken from a new suite of work that Fox has made for his presentation with David Kordansky at the upcoming edition of Independent. Fox didn't make this group of paintings with a singular narrative in mind, he tells me in an interview at his studio and home in Poughkeepsie, a former firehouse that he shares with his wife—the artist Huma Bhabha—and three rowdy dogs. But one takes shape regardless: it is a party in the park with a few uninvited guests, an American landscape study that alludes to, though not with a heavy hand, the chaotic psychic energy that underpins the country's current mood. "They all have a kind of blue sky, green, gray sort of palette that just happened by accident [...] it feels like you're in this insane picnic," he says of the work. "[I'm] trying to be a little more upbeat but there's obviously a kind of dark side to what's going on." Fox points to the hockey mask painting: "This white guy entitlement thing is just so real, it's such an American thing, too," he says. "You have a lot of these people who are just so fucking angry because they have this expectation about their lives and the fact that reality is not matching up with it."

Another touchstone for the new works is a room at the Prado National Museum in Madrid, which is filled with paintings by Francisco Goya that capture a sunny, lighthearted portrayal of rural Spanish life. Fox compares the effect of the works, which were created as studies for decorative tapestries and all happen in a similar countryside location, to a scene from a movie. The recurring characters in Fox's work—both real, imaginary, or some combination of the two—also have a film-like quality. "In [Ingmar] Bergman movies he works with the same actors from movie to movie, so I always feel like that," Fox says. "There are these different characters that you develop that you can pick and choose." Fox has decades of imagery to choose from. Early on, he painted figures pulled from his own internal world; their forms and reference paths called to the histories of science fiction and animation. Around 20 years ago, he started to incorporate photographic references.

For Fox, these pop cultural references have the ability to function as pure visual information. "People get caught up in the image, that's something I've realized over the years. They don't really look at art, they read art, and they really just react to the subject matter," Fox says. One new painting, which places a sort of gargoyle character on the top of an image of a woman based on the folk singer Joni Mitchell, moves beyond its referents and enters into a less concrete visual space, one more defined by the artist's internal world. "It's not really important that people know it's [Mitchell], or she's recognizable," Fox says.



Jason Fox, *What About Me*, 2026, acrylic and pencil on canvas, 90 1/8 x 62 x 1 5/8 inches. Photography by Christopher Stach. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.



Jason Fox, *Earth, Stone & Sky*, 2026, acrylic and pencil on canvas, 62 x 90 x 1 5/8 inches. Photography by Christopher Stach. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.

Speaking of his wider influences, Fox namechecks Philip Guston, Pablo Picasso, and Georg Baselitz as just a few of his major reference points. The imprint of those masters can be seen throughout his larger body of work, which has recently included exhibitions at David Kordansky in Los Angeles and *Antiheroes* (2025-26), the artist's first solo exhibition in China, which took place at Cc Foundation in Shanghai. Between 1991 and 2005, Fox exhibited at the legendary New York gallery Feature Inc., run by the dealer Hudson until his death in 2014. The characters that Fox built and reconfigured in this time still inform how he makes work, his coming Independent exhibition being no exception. Fox's masked man dates back to the early 1990s. "Sometimes I'll go back and I'll look at something I did like 30 years ago. I'm like, Oh I forgot about that," Fox says. "Maybe I should do that guy [again]."



Photography by Huma Bhabha. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery.

In the period since Fox has been making these characters, the broader context around figurative painting has shifted wildly. Though representative painting has been prominent over the past decade, in our interview, Fox reminds me of a time when his work was dismissed by some within contemporary art's centers. The artist recalled a studio visit from the early 1990s that was illustrative of the mood of the era, a moment defined by appropriation art and conceptual art. When looking at Fox's wonky figurative paintings, the artist visiting Fox's studio asked where he had sourced his images from. When Fox told him that they were made up, the visitor became disinterested. Fox said that, at the time, making figurative work "felt totally transgressive, but fortunately, my wife felt the same way". Which is to say: their creative mindstates were aligned—they were going to make art on their own terms. "You just kind of realized you're in it for the long haul," Fox says.