KAJAHL

OBSCURE ORIGINS

Curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah

April 22nd - June 18th, 2017

Opening April 22, **Tillou Fine Art** will present ***Obscure Origins*,** the first comprehensive solo presentation in New York City of paintings and studies by Brooklyn-based artist **KAJAHL**. Curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah, this exhibition presents a focused survey of KAJAHL’s portraits, which combine iconography from African, Asian, European, and Pre-Columbian traditions. The fusion of these symbols results in the creation of enigmatic artworks that foreground the forgotten past and reanimate minor artifacts of history into transformative assemblages.

KAJAHL draws inspiration for his paintings from visiting historic sites, mining archives, books, museums and the internet, and then uses these resources to create new iconographic mythologies and narratives. This results in the manifestation of hybridized entities that he produces and transforms into grandiose figures. ***Obscure Origins*** spotlights this diverse cast of characters ranging from majestic deities, royal leaders, scientists, cryptid like amphibians to seafaring explorers. KAJAHL places these subjects in diverse habitats tightly occupied inside their own unique universe that possess a mesmerizing and tantalizing effect.

He adroitly melds materials and objects in his paintings, blending together disparate elements to create a new fiction as the figures he depicts defy and obscure classification. For example, in *Aquatic Submerged III*, he paints an oxidized iron torso that seamlessly fuses into a jadeite greenstone bust. In *Scientific Method I*, we see a figure seated in front of what appears to be altered hieroglyphs, meddling with strange cadavers and undefined creatures. Here, KAJAHL incorporates still life and portraiture to explore the outer limits of appropriation and identity.

Alongside these paintings, a series of small studies will also be included in the exhibition. Amulets, funerary effigies and fragmentary busts are rendered with a striking use of expressive brushwork, reflecting both his command of the medium and versatile ability to construct alternate realities through a variety of painting techniques.

*Obscure Origins* opens to the public on **Saturday**, **April 22nd, 2017** from **4PM** to **7PM.**

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**KAJAHL**’s work has been exhibited in a number of group shows including 30 Americans; Next Generation, Contemporary Wing, Washington, DC and at MoCADA, emerging; Visual Art and Music in a Post-Hip-Hop Era, Brooklyn, NY. In 2012 Kajahl exhibited his first solo show at the University North Carolina Wilmington Arts Gallery, Wilmington, NC. In 2013 Kajahl was a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors grant. In 2016 he participated in the Joan Mitchell Center, Artist in Residence in New Orleans, LA. Also in 2016 Kajahl exhibited in ‘In Context: Africans in America’, Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg, ZA.  KAJAHL currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

**Larry Ossei-Mensah** is a Ghanaian-American independent curator and cultural critic who uses contemporary art and culture as a vehicle to redefine how we see ourselves and the world around us. He has organized exhibitions at commercial and nonprofit galleries throughout New York City featuring a roster of critically acclaimed artists including Firelei Baez, ruby amanze, Hugo McCloud and Brendan Fernandes to name a few. Ossei-Mensah is also the Co-Founder of ARTNOIR, a global collective of culturalists who design multimodal experiences aimed to engage this generation’s dynamic and diverse creative class. He has documented contemporary art happenings for various publications and his writings have profiled some of the most dynamic visual artists working today—Derrick Adams, Mickalene Thomas, Kehinde Wiley, Lorna Simpson and street artist JR.

For additional information, press requests, or sales inquiries, please contact **Michelle Tillou** at [**Michelle@tilloufineart.com**](mailto:Michelle@tilloufineart.com).

*Tillou Fine Art is open Thursday – Saturday, 12 – 6PM And By Appointment*

*59 Cambridge Place, Brooklyn, New York 11238*