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Esteban Cabeza de Baca



See the Beauty in Others, 2020

For the 2020 edition of Art Basel, Garth Greenan Gallery would like to present *Esteban Cabeza de Baca*, an online solo exhibition of six paintings by Esteban Cabeza de Baca. In his work, Cabeza de Baca employs a broad range of painterly techniques, entwining layers of graffiti, landscape, and pre-Columbian pictographs in ways that confound Cartesian single-point perspective.

In *Cavity* (2020), the artist depicts a clay-orange scene patterned with faint woodgrain. Dark patches define planes above and below the red-orange surface, like atmospheric clouds and cavernous pockets. A human skeleton is cocooned in one such pocket, perhaps a lucky but morbid discovery of an anthropological excavation. The sharp borders of these dark patches—products of masking the canvas—also highlight the painting's abrupt two-dimensionality, evoking the flattened layers of digital space. Pictographs, like those seen in Pueblo rock art, meander along the bottom of the canvas, mixing

with colonial symbols: a star that looks like a sheriff's badge, a church with crucifix. The artist depicts layer upon layer of sediment, and history.

In *There There* (2020), Cabeza de Baca foregrounds a giant pink foot in the middle of a Southwestern landscape, evoking Philip Guston's paintings of disembodied feet. "Quick-to-See Smith and Edgar Heap of Birds count among his influences," Siddhartha Mitter wrote in the *New York Times*, "but so does Jackson Pollock, whose attraction to Navajo sand painting—said to have inspired the drip technique—registers as simultaneously genuine and colonial." Cabeza de Baca's engagement with painting's history is omnivorous. "He puts the Lakota medicine wheel and Chinese color theory on equal footing with Josef Albers," wrote Mitter. In this and other works, Cabeza de Baca's hybrid techniques and influences form a complex braid: interrogating the dialectical relationships between colonialism and its critique, between cultural extraction and its inversion.

Born in San Ysidro, CA in 1985, Esteban Cabeza de Baca received a BFA from Cooper Union, School of the Arts in 2010 and an MFA from Columbia University in 2014. He currently lives and works in Queens, NY.

Cabeza de Baca's childhood hometown of San Ysidro virtually straddled the U.S.–Mexico border, as did his family. His father and Mexican-born mother were active participants in the Brown Berets, as well as the Chicano, American Indian, and Black Panther movements. Of Mexican and Native American heritage himself, Cabeza de Baca was heavily influenced by the border town's liminal position, and by his parents, whose intersectional political awareness and respect for human dignity led them to shelter "illegal" immigrants in their basement during his youth.

Cabeza de Baca has received numerous grants and awards including, a Robert Gamblin Painting Grant (2013); a Stern Fellowship, Columbia University (2013); a Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program Award (2014); a Stokroos Foundation Grant (2017); and a Henk en Victoria de Heus Fellowship (2018). His work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, such as: *Bluer Than a Sky Weeping Bones*, Gaa Gallery, (2016, Provincetown, MA); *Unlearn*, Fons Welters Gallery, (2018, Amsterdam); *Verano*, with Heidi Howard, Gaa Gallery, (2018, Wellfleet, MA); *Esteban Cabeza de Baca, Gaa Projects* (2019, Cologne); *Worlds without Borders, Boers-Li Gallery* (2019, New York); and *Esteban Cabeza de Baca – Life is one drop in limitless oceans ...*, Kunstfort Vijfhuizen, (2019, Amsterdam). He has participated in over 15 group exhibitions at venues such as the Leroy Neiman Art Center (2014, 2015, New York), the Yale University School of Sacred Music (2017, New Haven, CT), the Dutch Royal Palace (2018, Amsterdam, Netherlands), and the Drawing Center (2019, New York), among others.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Esteban Cabeza de Baca.

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