

For Immediate Release

Benjamin Senior
Black Sun

December 9th – January 8th, 2017
Opening Friday December 9, 6–8 pm

Benjamin Senior (b. 1982) takes his cue from classically inclined painters such as Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Jean Helion, and Andree Derain. Largely ignored in the narrative of Greenbergian art history, these painters established continuity between historical painting and the art of their own time through contemplative observations of the seen world. Senior's use of materials is also rooted in traditional practices, preparing chalk gesso grounds and grinding raw pigments into egg tempera paint.

Known for his dynamic paintings of athletes in motion, Senior has said that he chooses his subject matter because it is in these moments that human figure becomes abstracted. The subject provides a springboard for the artist's obsessive games of composition and construction. This exhibition expands Senior's vocabulary with tableaux of parks, interiors and more. In one painting, *The Pier (Run)*, Senior presents a woman running, scattering a number of seagulls as she passes. The blade-like wings slice the space into fragmentary windows, obscuring yet also framing and intensifying the scene beyond, creating dynamic tension between painterly flatness and illusory depth. Furthermore this painting features a parasol, a pictorial element often seen in Senior's work.

The umbrella or parasol is a trope that has appeared through paintings history, particularly in the city scenes of 19th century Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters. The umbrella becomes a reoccurring character in Senior's tableaux, appearing in various forms to be held against rain and sun. In the painting *Drench*, for instance, an array of umbrellas protect individuals as they scurry through a London downpour. Like many of the objects held in Senior's paintings the umbrellas become an extension of the figure that holds them: a façade for expression and protection. A striking formal motif, the umbrellas dominate the rhythm of the painting, casting colorful filtered light over their holders. A large umbrella held by two squabbling children depicts the color wheel -- an explicit reference to the color theory that haunted Senior's 19th and 20th century heroes -- anticipating a rainbow, which is often the sequel to heavy rain.

Throughout the exhibition Senior is a flaneur of the contemporary landscape with an anachronistic lens. The world he portrays seems at once random and rigorously choreographed, as if the universe achieved brief synchronicity. The world according to Seniors paintings is optimistic. An interconnected harmony is achieved through a disquieting level of control that determines everything from the pattern of a dog's pelt to the placement of clouds in the sky. Though the artist himself never appears in his paintings, he is both nowhere and everywhere as we are reminded of the hand of the maker in everything.

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