

# LAMONTAGNE GALLERY

Is pleased to announce a two-person exhibition featuring

## Erik Benson & Oscar Morel

January 6 - February 11, 2023

Opening Reception: Friday January 6 5:00-8:00 pm



**ERIK BENSON**



**OSCAR MOREL**

LaMontagne Gallery is pleased to present a two-person exhibition of works by Erik Benson and Oscar Morel, two artists experimenting with notions of “painting” and “collage”

Erik Benson makes paintings informed by and depicting elements of common, everyday objects in and of urban landscape. The artist expands upon common held ideas of painting through process. Taking acrylic paint, the artist pours the medium on glass panels to form most of the shapes seen in the finished work. Once dry, these shapes are peeled from the panels and placed on primed and underpainted canvases, often-times painted upon themselves, incorporated into the painting. In “Smile”, a poured acrylic rock is the focal point of the canvas. “Collaged” on or around this central image is a floating helium balloon, yarn, tape, some branches... The boldness of the colors as well as Benson’s technique rockets the viewer’s gaze from foreground to background, from the actual subjects themselves to the materiality of the paint, as if

vacillating between digital and analog. Benson seemingly grants the viewer permission to come to terms with preconceived notions of painting, of what is real and what is unreal. Benson is also allowing the audience to pause, reflect and respond. In these moments of being present is when and where Benson's unique vision and talent fully shine.

Oscar Morel creates mixed media works that blur the mediums of collage and painting. The process begins with Morel sketching out the scenes he wishes to portray, similar to how Dutch and Renaissance painters made common or current techniques modern theater or video game designers create the scenes for their "plots". Morel draws upon his ample drawing and painting skills during this stage, experimenting with the placement of characters in a setting until he satisfactorily transfers his thoughts to paper or canvas. Using new and recycled mixed materials (including discarded canvases from peer artists) these resultant works are rich with depth, balance, texture, shadow, rhythm and line. In "Knocks on the Door", we view the rather familiar, everyday scene of a man sitting on a couch, his four-legged companion sitting next to him at attention, as if waiting for the viewer. The man's skin is a pastiche of pigments. The fur of the animal, although mostly black, is spotted with shades of grays and flashes of white. In the background a plant, again familiar yet unique in its depiction of leaves and vessel, is placed in front of a neutral wall by the window, just so. In other artist's hands this might easily come off as charming or quaint, itself an exceptional feat for artists. Morel's subjects are created with such a degree of empathy the viewer can be let in on it, if they are willing. The audience may be awakened to searching for the commonalities they can relate to in each piece while perhaps simultaneously downplaying the differences. Morel exposes the audience to his subjects from his unique viewpoint, enabling viewers to customize the narrative and possibly picturing themselves in the plane.

Eric Benson's concurrent museum exhibition "Maker" is on view at the St. John's University Arts Center at St. John's University in Collegeville, MN until March 17. Eric Benson resides in Minnesota.

Oscar Morel just completed a McDowell Fellowship this past December. Oscar Morel resides in New York.

Lamontagne Gallery  
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