

# shfap

## Julian Gaines

### *Painting the Blueprint*

July 24 - September 3, 2021

Wednesday – Saturday, 12-6pm

and by appointment



Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects presents *Painting the Blueprint*, an exhibition by Julian Gaines, (b.1991) also known as *#JuWorkingonProjects*. Working on unstretched canvas, Gaines creates monumental elegiac portraits of significant Black figures representing their lives and stories. Painting his subjects from photographs, he juxtaposes a mix of pop culture iconography with abstract mark making. The people depicted in his work — Malcolm X, Michael Stewart, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, Carol Denise McNair and Ben Wilson died amidst a climate of racist violence. Gaines' paintings form a tribute that celebrate and memorialize his subjects.

Julian Gaines was born and raised in the southeast side of Chicago, and now lives and works in Portland, Oregon. He received his B.A. in painting from Northern Michigan University in 2015, where he concentrated on both art and athletics. His creative endeavors, such as the Game Worn series—a collaboration with Nike consisting of sneakers designed and inspired by 80's shoe designs—reflects his character as an artist and athlete. Gaines channels these various aspects of his identity and experience into his artwork, engaging in a critical dialogue with the world from a contemporary Black artist's perspective. Gaines' large-scale pieces incorporate relevant words, letters and ideas, along with motifs of records and weapons, tipping his hat to his immediate forebears, such as Jean-Michel Basquiat. He often paints in black and white, lending his subjects a sense of gravitas.

Gaines has cultivated a significant social following, demonstrating how resonant his work is within our current cultural zeitgeist. In 2018, Voyager Sopris Learning—a company that provides professional development for education—commissioned Gaines to create their signature #IAmMore graphics, as the focal point of their campaign designed to “give teachers and students a voice to share their stories.” In 2020, Gaines participated as one of 48 artists for New York Magazine's “I Voted” sticker collection featured on the cover of October's issue. Two months later, Gaines' work was featured solo on the cover of New York Magazine, with his paintings of “Karens,” alongside an article about this phenomenon. Gaines' last exhibition, *Black Souls*, was at Art Basel in 2018.

In commemorating their lives, Gaines gives power to his subjects. He is a purveyor of inadequately known narratives, participating in what he describes as the “New Black History.” Gaines says: “I am infatuated with making stuff look good; juxtaposing art and athletics as well as the ideology of using creativity, experimentation and great design, to inspire the people/youth around me.” Considering Black social history as a paradigm for culture in the United States, *Painting the Blueprint* honors the collective memory of underappreciated, yet profoundly influential Black people in recent American history.

steven harvey fine art projects

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