Lucy Rees, "Derek Fordjour," Galerie, March 5, 2019.

Galerie

Derek Fordjour

The rising-star artist uses imagery of carnivals, sporting contests, casinos, and games to grapple with complex issues

by LUCY REES

MARCH 5, 2019

At last winter's Art Basel in Miami Beach, artist Derek Fordjour (https://derekfordjour.com/) transformed London dealer Josh Lilley's booth with five tons of gravel, corrugated steel, and barbed wire—all for an immersive faux-backlot installation that included several of his beautiful textured paintings. "The idea was borne out of frustration with the sterility of art fairs," says the Brooklyn-based talent, who is preparing for a solo exhibition with Lilley in May. (His first gallery show opened at L.A.'s Night Gallery in February.)

Fordjour uses imagery of carnivals, sporting contests, casinos, and games to grapple with complex issues like race and societal inequality in a "visually rich and accessible way."

Derek Fordjour's installation at Josh Lilley's booth at Art Basel in Miami Beach 2018.

Photo: Nicholas Knight

Born in Memphis, Tennessee, the rising star first caused a stir in late **2017** with a playful installation at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum in Harlem; last fall, he installed a massive **17**-by-**29**-foot wall work across the street from the Whitney Museum that subtly reflects on gun violence. Uptown, at the **145**th Street subway station in Harlem, a suite of mosaics from his "Parade" series dazzle passersby on their daily commute as part of the MTA Arts & Design project.
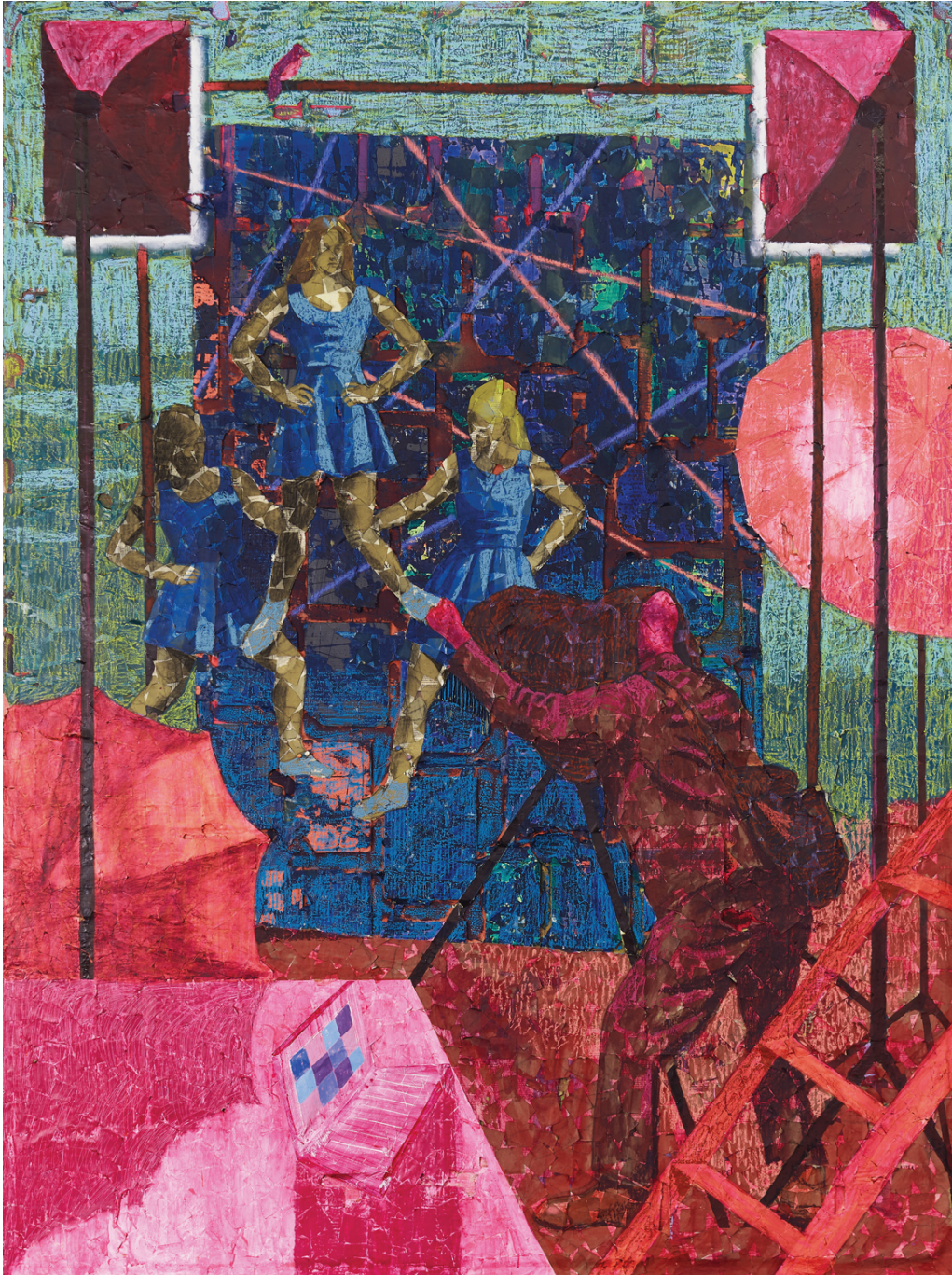

Derek Fordjour, *Pageant,* 2018.

Photo: Courtesy of Josh Lilley Gallery

Derek Fordjour, *Picture Day*, 2018.
Photo: Courtesy of Josh Lilley Gallery

Currently, Fordjour is adding Instagram to his list of influences, with the aim to learn about the work of an entirely new artist every day. "I'm infinitely inspired."