

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

nightgallery.ca

"The Artsy Vanguard 2019," Artsy, September 16, 2019

ARTSY

Derek Fordjour

B. 1974, Memphis, Tennessee. Lives and works in New York.



Derek Fordjour in his New York studio by Alex John Beck for Artsy.



Derek Fordjour, "Signing Day," 2019, Courtesy of Night Gallery.

Derek Fordjour's vibrant paintings entice the viewer with colorful surfaces, frequently built up with skillfully applied cardboard and newspaper. They often feature athletes, cheerleaders, and marching bands. Fittingly, last December, the artist's sold-out presentation (with Josh Lilley) at Art Basel in Miami Beach was a gravel-covered arena with enamored fairgoers becoming his cheering crowd.

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Derek Fordjour, "Three Bend Deep," 2019, Courtesy of Night Gallery.

Over the past two years, enthusiasm for Fordjour has only grown. The Whitney Museum of American Art commissioned him to create a mural, *Half Mast* (2018), in which he addresses gun violence; the Brooklyn Academy of Music featured one of his paintings; and Miami's Nina Johnson gallery gave him a solo show. He joined the roster of Los Angeles's Night Gallery last year and had a solo exhibition there this past spring. In April, New York's Petzel Gallery announced that it would be representing Fordjour, too. He's also garnered the support of American royalty: Beyoncé. At Frieze New York this past May, the pop star purchased Fordjour's *Top-Ten ALLSTARS* (2019), a series of 10 portraits. His first major solo museum exhibition will open in 2020 at the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis.

The hype is well-earned. CAM St. Louis chief curator Wassan Al-Khudhairi noted that Fordjour's work is "immediately attractive," with moving undertones that are at times dark. "His uniformed figures represent a longing to be a part of something, yet a basic unfairness persists," Al-Khudhairi explained. "Fordjour's subtle appeal to viewers, persuading them toward difficult subject matter, stands out in our very unsubtle moment in history."