

Palm Beach Social Diary

Forrest Kirk: Blind Tiger at Gavlak Gallery

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Installation view at GAVLAK Palm Beach: Forrest Kirk, *Blind Tiger*, 2021.

PALM BEACH • BY: PBSD STAFF

The Gavlak Gallery in Palm Beach is currently featuring Los Angeles-based artist **Forrest Kirk's** first solo exhibition. An opening reception took place on February 24th and the exhibition will continue through March 21st at the gallery's location at the Royal Poinciana Plaza.

Blind Tiger consists of seven paintings that present the findings of Forrest's exhaustive research into the secret and obscured histories of Palm Beach. This responsive visual chronicle scrapes back the layers that constitute the town's glamorous façade to uncover communities hiding in plain sight.



Forrest

Kirk, *Fist 27*, 2021, Acrylic, spray paint, and gorilla glue on canvas 48 x 48 in (121.9 x 121.9 cm).

A 2008 graduate of California State University in Los Angeles, Forrest's investigations into Palm Beach's past revealed a parallel with his personal history. When Forrest was a child, his stepfather operated several gambling sites concealed within the shells of legitimate businesses. In the late 19th century, Palm Beach was home to a predominantly Black settlement called The Styx, which included a network of speakeasies disguised as legal establishments

known as “blind tigers.” Behind hidden entrances the pulse of a vital circuit of nightlife and entertainment throbbed. Forrest was inspired to repurpose a familiar form as the vessel for images that manifest for those who know to look for them.



Forrest

Kirk, *Fist 26*, 2021, Acrylic, spray paint, and gorilla glue on canvas 48 x 48 in (121.9 x 121.9 cm).

Six of the seven works in the exhibition take the form of the Black Power fist featured prominently in Forrest's earlier work; like the underground networks of *The Styx*, however, these forms contain multitudes. Forrest's process is equal parts painting and excavation, employing unconventional 19th century wreck of the *Providencia*, whose coconut cargo would transform the landscape of Palm Beach in ways that endure into the present day.

In *Blind Tiger* the spectral figures that flicker throughout Forrest's other canvases wink in and out on plumes of aerosolized paint in the materials such as Gorilla Glue, which he uses as a base to mix with acrylic colors and as a means of establishing a sculptural dimension in his work. Subcutaneous layers of paint are partially scraped away to produce a reaction between what first meets the eye, and all that has come before. Peaks and gullies of impasto coalesce into the splintered timbers of a ship, evoking the distinctly Floridian hues of hot pink, seafoam green, and teal. Like its namesake, *Blind Tiger* encapsulates a complex network of social relations within a modest exterior, inviting in the adventurous for a deeper dive.



Forrest

Kirk, *Fist 31*, 2021, Acrylic, spray paint, and gorilla glue on canvas 60 x 48 in (152.4 x 121.9 cm).

Forrest Kirk lives and works in Los Angeles. Forrest's work appears in the permanent collections of the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. Notable solo shows include presentations for Parrasch Heijnen Gallery, Los Angeles (2020)

and Chimento Contemporary, Los Angeles (2018). Recent group exhibitions prominently featuring his work include Marianne Boesky, NY (2021); Hauser & Wirth, New York (2020); Center for the Arts, Pomona, California (2018); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Marin Novato, California (2018); and Art Share L.A. (2017).



Forrest Kirk, *Blind Tiger*, 2021, Acrylic, spray paint, and gorilla glue on canvas, 72 x 120 in (182.9 x 304.8 cm)