

MATTHEW BROWN LOS ANGELES

Tajh Rust
Where We Meet

February 1—March 14, 2020

Where We Meet is a meditation on the intersection of geographies. Tajh Rust's new solo exhibition was inspired by recent travels, which have taken him across the United States, the island of Cuba, and the coastal city of Dakar. The vast physical distances between these places are dissolved within this new body of paintings.

Water is the binding force that marries everything organic on our planet, and symbolically asserts as a significant, personal presence for Rust. Water can exist in three states, transcending the typical parameters ascribed to substances in the observable, material world—here it serves as the connective tissue between geographical locations and a metaphor for the notion of fluidity.

Rust's compositions break down the traditional barriers between interiors and exteriors, conveying the threshold of liminal space. The works weave in and out of figuration and abstraction to emanate psychological space. Elements are pulled from the everyday world to flip our expectations, engaging a state between realism and surrealism.

In a brand new format for Rust, *Where We Meet* presents three paintings with reflective mirrored surfaces, which were born of recent experiments with glass making. Suspended from the ceiling and situated within door and window frames, areas of the glass surfaces are left untouched allowing for the viewer to simultaneously experience each painting, see their own reflection, and through to the other side simultaneously.

In a conversation with Greg Tate at the Hammer, Arthur Jafa spoke of the seemingly disparate images he juxtaposed in his books and how people often question how these images relate to one another. Jafa concluded, "Where they meet is in you." *Where We Meet* utilizes reflection and fractals of reality to implicate the viewer in a way that pulls them into the compositions and empathize with their subjects.

Through figuration and abstraction, Tajh Rust explores the relationships between black identity and space. The artist collaborates with his subjects to determine how they are represented and also employs film and literary references to draw connections between portraiture, language, and modes of representation. While also taking inspiration from his own travels and imagination, Rust aims to manipulate the boundary between realism and surrealism.

Rust (b. 1989) is a visual artist based in New York and New Haven and a 2019 MFA graduate from the School of Art at Yale University. Rust received his bachelor's degree in Painting and Film from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York and he was in the inaugural group of artists participating in the Black Rock Senegal artist residency in August 2019. Since 2011, Rust's work has been exhibited at galleries and institutions including the August Wilson African American Cultural Center in Pittsburgh, the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts (MoCADA) in Brooklyn, the Bronx Art Space, Rush Arts Philadelphia, and Artspace in New Haven.

Where We Meet marks the artist's first solo exhibition in Los Angeles.