



***JEFF SONHOUSE: MASKED REDUCTION***

**SEPTEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> – OCTOBER 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2017**

**OPENING RECEPTION: SEPTEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>, 6 – 8 PM**

Tilton Gallery is delighted to present *Masked Reduction*, an exhibition of new works by Jeff Sonhouse, from September 14<sup>th</sup> through October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017. A reception for the artist will be held Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, from 6 - 8 pm. This is the artist's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery.

Sonhouse's subject is the African American male within Western culture. In *Masked Reduction*, he continues his focus on the figure, more specifically, the African American male portrait, drawing inspiration from media images as well as the long history of portraiture, and employing a visual language he's developed over the years. Repeated and edited over time, these characters have become his own.

Sonhouse's figures are presented frontally, painted close up to appear right on the canvas surface and indeed, are frequently built up with collage elements to extend into the viewer's space. Sonhouse simultaneously pares down his figures to focus on their essential formal elements, and builds up the surface, color and design elements to achieve maximum impact. His figures remain cool and somewhat distant, while often pulsating with hot, vibrant colors. The paintings are both beautiful and provocative.

Sonhouse's distinctive painting vocabulary includes the use of cut and collaged magazine images, carefully patterned and collaged matchsticks, steel wool and soldered metal, set against his carefully rendered painted illusions. His trademark harlequin pattern, superimposed upon the faces of his subjects, immediately makes the viewer aware that, although realistically painted, these are symbolic images. And shadows, such as those cast by a wide hat brim, often covering much of the faces, add mystery as well as a certain sexy aloofness to the figures. These devices, along with other recurring 'props,' create a fiction: they serve both to conceal the identity of the subject with the mask and bring a swagger to the figure. By drawing upon specific and overtly violent and sexual imagery prevalent in our culture, and by pushing his

figures' symbolism to the extreme, Sonhouse exposes the hypocrisy and absurdity inherent within the myths that surround the African American male.

Jeff Sonhouse was born in New York in 1968. He received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York in 1998 and his MFA from Hunter College, New York in 2001. His work has been included in exhibitions such as *Frequency* and *The Bearden Project*, at The Studio Museum in Harlem in 2005 and 2012 respectively; *30 Americans*, at the Rubell Family Collection, Miami in 2009 which traveled widely throughout museums across America through 2016; and *Face to Face: Los Angeles Collects Portraiture*, at the California African American Museum, Los Angeles in 2017. Solo museum exhibitions include *Probable Cause* at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center in 2003, and *Opener 26 Jeff Sonhouse: Slow Motion* at the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs in 2014. The artist lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.