

Ross + Kramer proudly presents *Let There Be Light*, the New York City solo exhibition debut by visual artist Patrick Alston. The exhibition delves into Alston's artistic investigation tied to a series of questions that he has been ruminating on for the past several years through his studio practice. *What is light? Are there inequities in access to light? Are these inequities amplified by rapid development and gentrification in low-income areas? Does poor access to light relate to mental health issues today?*

Let There Be Light is Alston's creative response to the many trials and tribulations that have impacted working-class urban areas, specifically in New York City. Development plans of the 20th Century that considered the experiences of the working-class communities in the city as secondary, including generations of redlining and systemic structures put in place to deny access to financial services to purchase a home, are now replaced by discriminatory practices that have catalyzed the displacement of these lower-income residents and gentrification of the most vulnerable neighborhoods, redefining the city's skyline and the communities that inhabit them in the 21st Century. The works featured in *Let There Be Light* were created over the last year starting in Alston's studio in The Bronx and are imbued with the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Searching for a way to interrogate these questions, concerns, and vital humanitarian issues cursing the communities who are the most vulnerable, Patrick Alston began his quest for answers the best way he knows how – make paintings about it. The act of painting is a very process-driven endeavor for Alston. Alston shares, "My process of creating an artwork begins with finding materials. Based on the materials that I find, I then begin to lay out a composition that incorporates found objects in addition to hand-dyed and store-bought fabrics that function as the base for the pieces. Upon laying out the base orientation of the paintings, I then sew these elements together, and from that point, I stretch the work and then begin the process of painting."

Let There Be Light is Alston's attempt to digest the perceived egalitarian dreams of city planners and developers that in the end only benefit the few with financial means and exacerbate the gap between the haves and have nots. These harsh realities often come at the expense of the working-class and for Alston he aims to articulate his perspective on the issues via an abstract expressionist response that calls into question these very acts. Cognizant of the shifting collective social consciousness in New York City and across the world, Alston has created a body of work that centers the gaze on unpacking the systemic racism plaguing urban communities like The Bronx. These issues that have normally been pushed to the sidelines are now taking center stage within the zeitgeist. A work like *A Few Stars, A lot of Stripes* (2021) exemplifies Alston's desire to confront these issues through his work. The piece features an American flag found near his studio in The Bronx and operates on a number of registers. These ideas are communicated through the creation of the actual artwork and the naming convention that he employs to punch up the tension reverberating within the work. *A Few Stars, A lot of Stripes* (2021), in particular, serves as a commentary on the failure of the 'American Dream' to benefit low-income communities, the proliferation of the prison industrial complex which disproportionately impacts Black and Brown people, and functions as a window into the artist's mind that he creates through the use of fabric that plays with the opacity of the painting. This layered approach to creating his paintings allows for a robust discourse within the work not only about the sociological toll on disenfranchised communities, but also the psychological impact that these issues have on low-income communities which tend to be discussed the least.

The paintings in this exhibition burst with color and vibrate with a rich line quality that lures the viewer into a deeper philosophical discourse that asks the questions - Who is included and excluded within the new area of urban restructuring? Who benefits, who loses? An example of the engagement with these questions is reflected in a work like *Exiled* (2021) that includes construction materials and found objects that Alston came across near his studio in The Bronx. This is a neighborhood that has been deeply impacted by gentrification catalyzed by the development of luxury high rises that will eventually price out residents who've made the area home for generations.

Beyond the socio-economic components of the inquiry, *Let There Be Light* is also an exhibition very much about the activity of abstract painting. Alston actively considers how his studio practice builds on the legacy of his predecessors through his own unique visual vocabulary. Inspired by the works of such artists as Raymond Saunders, Moe Brooker, and Deborah Dancy, Patrick Alston is part of the next generation of painters who utilizes the abstracted mark as his tool to decode, respond, and articulate his point of view on the contemporary. Moreover, in the case of Alston's practice, he has cultivated a deep commitment to interrogating the manipulation and orchestration of light, the development of spatial sequencing evoked through scale or the grid, and the utilization of material to create texture, luminosity, and emotion. These various strategies that Alston implements enables him to create this microcosmic effect that evokes urbanity, exteriority, and interiority. The works featured in the show are a culmination of hours of woodshedding in his studio and have resulted in the presentation of a powerful solo debut in his hometown of New York City.

Let There Be Light also explores theoretical components of color theory and the scientific study of light within this new series. He believes that the existence of the physical work and world can be defined as the encapsulation of light as matter, exemplifying the essential need for light in existence. By creating these highly gestural and chromatic paintings, Alston endeavors to shine a light on the current realities that tend to be overlooked by mainstream society. *Let There Be Light* is an invitation into a multilayered discussion that necessitates a more in-depth reading into the paintings in order to unfurl the story within the story.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Patrick Alston energetically creates works that, along with the interplay of titles, trigger thought-provoking and reflective topics including but not limited to socio-politics, identity, language, and the psychology of color. Alston's re-contextualized subjects, rich palettes, and complex compositions are dramatized exhilarating energies, expressed through mature gestural mark-making (some of which are reminiscent of the traditional graffiti culture of New York) that help to project an unwritten aesthetic which makes up the urban landscape. His finely tuned brush and knowledge of the rich art histories before him assist in the making of original artworks that create complex conversations in the spaces they occupy. Alston's images create harmonious tension and challenge viewers to look carefully at the world around them, discovering beauty in unconventional places.

Patrick Alston was born and raised in the Bronx, New York in 1991. He grew up in the South Bronx and attended Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, studying Art and Psychology. Alston lives and works between the Bronx and New Haven, CT.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

A native of The Bronx, Larry Ossei-Mensah uses contemporary art as a vehicle to redefine how we see ourselves and the world around us. The Ghanaian-American curator and cultural critic has organized exhibitions and programs at commercial and nonprofit spaces around the globe from New York City to Rome featuring artists such as Firelei Baez, Allison Janae Hamilton, Brendan Fernandes, Ebony G. Patterson, Modou Dieng, Glenn Kaino, Joiri Minaya and Stanley Whitney to name a few. Moreover, Ossei-Mensah has actively documented cultural happenings featuring the most dynamic visual artists working today such as Derrick Adams, Mickalene Thomas, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Federico Solmi, and Kehinde Wiley. Ossei-Mensah is the co-founder of the collective ARTNOIR in addition to serving as the Curator-at-Large at BAM.

-- *Larry Ossei-Mensah*

Ross+Kramer



Patrick Alston

A Change Gon Come, 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

84 x 108 inches

213 x 274 cm

PA1342



Patrick Alston

Set Suns, 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

72 x 72 inches

183 x 183 cm

PA1340



Patrick Alston

A Few Stars, A lot of Stripes, 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

72 x 72 inches

183 x 183 cm

PA1338



Patrick Alston

A Place We Once Called Home, 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

72 x 72 inches

183 x 183 cm

PA1341



Patrick Alston

Displaced 08 (Private Prisms), 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

36 x 36 inches

91 x 91 cm

PA1327



Patrick Alston

Displaced 06 (Eminent Domain), 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

36 x 36 inches

91 x 91 cm

PA1328



Patrick Alston

Displaced 01 (Still Desirable), 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

36 x 36 inches

91 x 91 cm

PA1329



Patrick Alston

Displaced 07 (Foundations), 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

36 x 36 inches

91 x 91 cm

PA1330



Patrick Alston

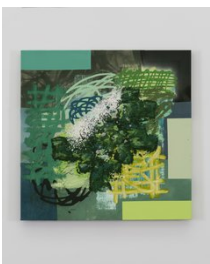
Displaced 05 (Hazardous), 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

36 x 36 inches

91 x 91 cm

PA1331



Patrick Alston

Displaced 03 (Future Development), 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

36 x 36 inches

91 x 91 cm

PA1333



Patrick Alston

Displaced 02 (Declining), 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

36 x 36 inches

91 x 91 cm

PA1332



Patrick Alston

Displaced 04 (OSHA), 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

36 x 36 inches

91 x 91 cm

PA1334



Patrick Alston

One Set of Footsteps, 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

42 x 42 inches

107 x 107 cm

PA1335



Patrick Alston

Progressin' Through the Stressin', 2021

Acrylic, oil, oil stick and found objects on sewn fabric and vinyl

50 x 50 inches

127 x 127 cm

RS1336



Patrick Alston

Concrete Boyz 005, 2021

Acrylic, pastel and enamel on hand made paper

16 x 12 inches

30 x 41 cm

PA1320



Patrick Alston

Concrete Boyz 001, 2021

Acrylic, pastel and enamel on hand made paper

16 x 12 inches

30 x 41 cm

PA1322



Patrick Alston

Concrete Boyz 006, 2021

Acrylic, pastel and enamel on hand made paper

16 x 12 inches

30 x 41 cm

PA1325



Patrick Alston

Concrete Boyz 004, 2021

Acrylic, pastel and enamel on hand made paper

16 x 12 inches

30 x 41 cm

PA1324



Patrick Alston

Concrete Boyz 002, 2021

Acrylic, pastel and enamel on hand made paper

16 x 12 inches

30 x 41 cm

PA1326



Patrick Alston

Concrete Boyz 003, 2021

Acrylic, pastel and enamel on hand made paper

16 x 12 inches

30 x 41 cm

PA1321



Patrick Alston

Concrete Boyz 007, 2021

Acrylic, pastel and enamel on hand made paper

16 x 12 inches

30 x 41 cm

PA1323