

Jacob Freeman
In Violet Light

January 19 – February 26, 2023

On view at rainraingallery.com/speakeasy

RAINRAIN is pleased to announce *In Violet Light*, the solo exhibition of the Canadian artist Jacob Freeman. Borrowing its title from the rock band The Tragically Hip's 2002 album, *In Violet Light* presents Freeman's recent paintings, with which he has built an imagined world – a liminal space where ghosts, floating wearables, avatars, monsters, and side characters inhabit. Freeman carries out enduring allegorical experiments: taking painting as his tool and source of inspiration in the quest for tales in popular culture that influences human experience in and outside his imagined alternative universe, and deeper dive into the appropriation and transmutation of such culture. The exhibition will be on view from January 19, 2023 at Speakeasy, RAINRAIN's online space.

Freeman builds a world with paintings just as a fantasy fiction writer does with words. The portraits on canvas thus become characters in his fictional world, with each painting investigating deeper into the backdrop, stories, and everything around them. This world would have its own physics and rules, religions, history, ecosystem, spirits, heroes, and monsters. *Jonah* best interprets Freeman's dedication to the setting and the world's inhabitants: developed on top of the Judaic and Islamic tale of *Jonah and the Whale*, the painting unveils Freeman's endeavor to world-build a belief system of motor worship, and to elaborate on what these characters would wear, what tales would be told, and how the monsters would interact with the subjects.

All of these characters roam free in this universe that mirrors our own, and the side characters are trapped in a state of constant reverberation. Here, people who might resemble us have multiple faces, vibrating in and out of each other, like the one seen in *Little Bones*, the subject of which is based on a sourced image of John Travolta. The repetition is both a compositional crux and a narrative tool that fills the picture with stuffiness and becomes a "hair-in-the-soup" moment for the viewers.

Intrigued by art historical references over time, Freeman blends his deep fascination with NASCAR garments, video game maps, and avatars into the paintings on view. In *Thin & Wicked Prairie Winds*, Freeman borrows the form of traditional portrait painting where the singular main subject takes up the center of the canvas, standing or sitting in a solemn or divine fashion; he places imagined religion and spiritual symbols of this fictional world in place of such figures, as much as how the singular suit represents a ghostly apparition floating in an open field, a composition inspired from Thomas Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy*.

Colors are essential elements of Freeman's practice. Only with them was he able to enter an intuitive process to create magical spaces. The exhibition title alludes to the sky color at twilight, a transitional symbol between night and day. To Freeman, violet stands as a metaphor of an introduction to the visible and invisible, the known and

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unknown—between reality and fantasy, much like how art and painting can be used as this introduction between imagination and existence, intuition and logic—for both the practitioner and the observer.

About the Artist

Jacob Freeman (b. 1994) is a Canadian artist based in Vancouver, British Columbia. Jacob obtained his BFA with honors from the University of Western Ontario in 2016. Fascinated by painting's long history, he uses the medium as a means to build an alternative world and its inhabitants, where its own physics, rules, religions, history, and spirits define the cultural sphere of the imagined land. He develops an ongoing narrative about the poetic structure of nature, and to explore how the appropriation and transmutation of historical tropes and motifs lead contemporary painting to unfamiliar aesthetic spaces. Freeman draws from the iconography of American culture, and investigates how the costume and performance endemic to the region relate to Christianity and historical painting.

Freeman previously held exhibitions at galleries including This Month Only, Toronto; Race Car Factory, Indianapolis; Abbotto Gallery, Toronto; Art Gallery of Mississauga, Mississauga; Forest City Gallery, London, CA. He has won the "Best In Show" award at the Quest Art 13th Annual Juried Exhibition, Quest Art, Midland, ON.

About the Gallery

RAINRAIN (formerly L–Art Gallery) was founded by Rain Lu in 2011, in Chengdu, China. From 2011 to 2017, the gallery worked closely with emerging and mid-career artists and played a significant role in introducing a new generation of artists to audiences in Asia. After Rain's relocation to New York City, the gallery program continues in 2022. It carries on with the passion for supporting and working with artists whose unique and inspiring work depicts and reflects individuals, society, and our time. At the same time, the gallery works to initiate more dialogues between Asia and the West. RAINRAIN understands the fluidity of identities and perspectives, appreciates differences, and hopes to create a community that celebrates openness, cross-cultural interactions, and ultimately, the love for art.

Press Inquiry

press@rainraingallery.com