

The Sweet Appreciation of Freedom

Patrick Alston

Genevieve Gaignard

Alex Jackson

Rindon Johnson

Tariku Shiferaw

January 17 - February 28, 2026

Opening Reception

Saturday, January 17, 2026, 5 - 7pm



Genevieve Gaignard, *This Wonderful Country of Ours*, 2025.



Rindon Johnson, *Peace Rot, again, again, again, again, again, again (the bottom of the drain)*, 2025.

Jenkins Johnson San Francisco presents *The Sweet Appreciation of Freedom*, an exhibition featuring contemporary artists of the diaspora who address pressing social, political, and cultural issues of today. Taking its title from a famous quote by Malcolm X, “It’s only after slavery and prison that the sweetest appreciation of freedom can come,” the exhibition takes place during Black History Month and coincides with the anniversary of Malcolm X’s assassination. Sixty-one years later, these words remain relevant as these artists confront contemporary struggles.

Through painting, sculpture, photography, installation, and writing, Patrick Alston, Genevieve Gaignard, Alex Jackson, Rindon Johnson, and Tariku Shiferaw explore ideas of liberation, identity, and resilience, challenging systemic racism while celebrating Black empowerment, creativity, and agency. Their work affirms that freedom is not only a historical struggle but a present and ongoing practice.

The Sweet Appreciation of Freedom opens 5:00–7:00 pm on Saturday, January 17, at Jenkins Johnson Gallery San Francisco, and will be on view through Saturday, February 28, 2026. The exhibition coincides with FOG Design + Art opening in San Francisco during San Francisco Art Week.

Rindon Johnson is a multidisciplinary artist and author whose work is rooted in the primacy



Tariku Shiferaw, *Dahomey*, 2025.

of language. Born and raised in San Francisco (on the unceded territories of the Ohlone peoples), Johnson's practice moves fluidly across sculpture, video, poetry, and virtual and augmented reality, allowing him to examine how language structures personal and collective realities. Grounded in a gender- and race-critical perspective, Johnson interrogates the industrial, poetic, and digital technologies that shape captivity, value, and autonomy. Central to his work is the cow, a figure bred and engineered for human consumption, through which he explores systems of extraction, capitalism, and the entanglement of bodies, nature, and commerce. Using materials such as cowhide, wood, stone, and digital environments, Johnson reframes the notion of the "byproduct" as an existential condition rather than a residual one. Though often regarded as a luxury material, leather is a byproduct of the meat industry, a residue rather than a primary substance. Considering the broader history of capitalism, Johnson suggests that American Blackness itself can be understood as a byproduct of the transatlantic slave trade. His work has been featured in major international exhibitions, including *Quiet as It's Kept* (New York, 2022), and *Foreigners Everywhere*, the 60th Biennale di Venezia (Venice, 2024). Johnson has shown internationally, with solo

institutional exhibitions at Chisenhale Gallery, London under Zoé Whitley, SculptureCenter (New York, 2026), and Rockbund Art Museum (Shanghai, 2026), among others, including the Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, 2026). He has an upcoming group exhibition at MoMA PS1 (New York, 2026) this September, curated by Connie Butler, focused on abstraction. Across mediums, his work raises critical questions: What systems have come together to enable our existence and shape our thinking? How do we confront and reimagine our place within overlapping networks of exploitation, ecological consequence, and freedom?

Tariku Shiferaw is a New York-based artist whose practice is deeply shaped by his formative years and artistic education in Los Angeles. He continues to maintain strong West Coast connections, which inform his engagement with the physical, social, and political dimensions of art and society. Shiferaw's practice centers on mark making as both a formal and conceptual strategy, through which he investigates the metaphysical possibilities of painting and the systems that structure perception, identity, and power. Drawing from geometric abstraction, popular culture, and music rooted in Black diasporic traditions, his work merges mid-century abstraction with contemporary critical perspectives. Working across painting and installation, he examines how space is constructed, how meaning is assigned, and how societal structures are both reinforced and challenged. Shiferaw's approach also considers questions of visibility, inclusion, and cultural memory, emphasizing the ways in which marginalized histories and identities are represented, remembered, and celebrated. Across his practice, he creates strategies for rethinking exclusionary systems and imagining alternative frameworks for social and cultural engagement, highlighting the interconnectedness of aesthetics, politics, and community. His work has been featured in major exhibitions, including the Whitney Biennial (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2017), the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, 2026), the California African American Museum

(Los Angeles, 2026), the Zuckerman Museum of Art (Kennesaw, 2026), and the Museum of the African Diaspora (San Francisco, 2026). He has a solo exhibition at the Modern Art Museum, Addis Ababa (Addis Ababa, 2026) this March.

Multidisciplinary artist **Genevieve Gaignard's** perspective is shaped by her experience as a biracial woman navigating American identity, history, and culture, which forms the conceptual foundation of her practice. Gaignard investigates personal histories, popular culture, and racial dynamics, creating visually and emotionally layered environments that encourage viewers to reflect on the tensions between private identity, public life, and contemporary social concerns. Working across photography, collage, sculpture, and installation, she uses humor, domesticity, and haunting nostalgia to construct spaces that evoke America's past-as-present, while challenging social hierarchies and beauty standards. In her work, Gaignard frequently incorporates political commentary; pieces featuring text such as "Stop ICE" foreground contemporary debates around immigration and state power, connecting intimate narratives to larger social and political realities. Raised and working in Los Angeles, Gaignard's work has been widely exhibited in major institutions, including The Broad, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Getty, the Blanton Museum of Art, the National Portrait Gallery, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Nerman Museum, the Rennie Museum in Vancouver, and The Studio Museum in Harlem. Recent exhibitions include *Flight into Egypt: Black Artists and Ancient Egypt, 1876–Now* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (2025).

Alex Jackson's practice merges the disciplines of both painting and writing, using narrative and worldbuilding as conceptual frameworks for image-making. His practice is centered around continuously expanding text, a book of records kept by a character known as "The Architect," a maroon who believes he has fallen off the edge of the earth. In this text, he describes a series of visions emerging from the obsidian walls of his volcanic dwelling, detailing the arrival of a "child

with the skin of zero and the heart of a star, called E," whose cardio-supernova results in the creation of a dimension, also named E, where the boundaries of matter become fractured, broken, and collapsed. Shifting away from conventional laws of physics, linear narratives, color theories, and racial imaginaries that position Blackness as the site of negation, Jackson constructs a universe tending to the possible articulations of Black life and Black thought outside the colonial paradigms of integration and reconciliation. This narrative space serves as the guiding foundation, ethos, and framework for his practice as a writer and image-maker. Jackson currently lives and works in the greater Philadelphia area. He received his BFA from the University of Wisconsin–Madison (Madison,



Alex Jackson, *Prologue in the Color of Exile (Diptych)*, 2025.

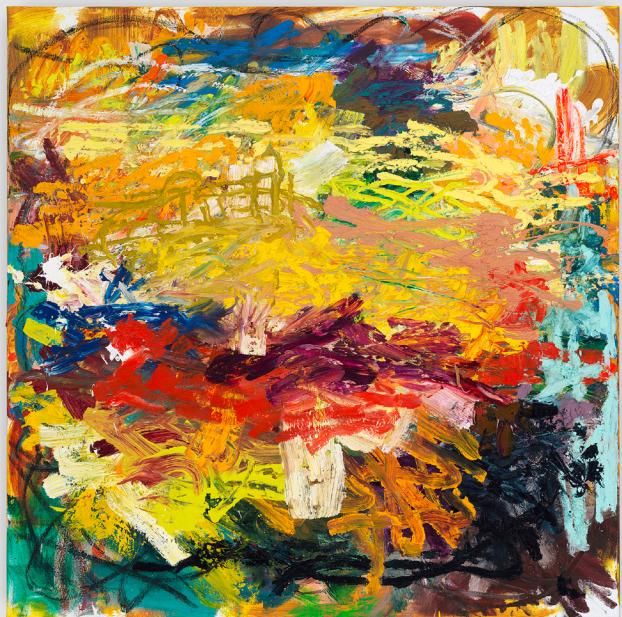
2015) and his MFA from Yale University (New Haven, 2017). He has attended residencies at Yale Norfolk, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and Yaddo. Recent exhibitions include *Chrysalis* (Jenkins Johnson Projects, Brooklyn, 2021) and *Earthgrazer* (Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston, 2023). His work is held in the collections of the de Young Museum (San Francisco), Santa Barbara Museum of Art (Santa Barbara), and The Studio Museum in Harlem (New York).

Patrick Alston creates works that explore compelling themes such as social politics, identity, language, and the psychology of color. His reinterpretations of subjects, vibrant color

schemes, and detailed compositions produce lively visuals through gestural mark-making, developing a visual language that encourages viewers to examine their surroundings and find beauty in unexpected places. Alston infuses his work with expressions of freedom and hope. “With every stroke, I hope to channel the resilience of the human spirit and evoke expressions of freedom that go beyond the boundaries of trauma. My art becomes a testament to the enduring strength of the human soul and an affirmation that freedom remains an unstoppable force. In this pursuit of freedom, let us collectively embrace the beauty amid tension, and may my paintings serve as beacons of hope, guiding the way toward healing, liberation, and the limitless potential of humanity.”

—Patrick Alston

The Sweet Appreciation of Freedom will be on view at 1275 Minnesota St., Suite #200, from Saturday, January 17, through Saturday, February 28, 2026. Gallery hours are 10:00 am–6:00 pm, Tuesdays through Saturdays. Please send inquiries to info@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com and follow us on Instagram [@jenkinsjohnsongallery](https://www.instagram.com/jenkinsjohnsongallery). All images copyright the artists and courtesy of the artists and Jenkins Johnson Gallery.



Patrick Alston, *Sequence*, 2025