

Tony Shore

Blue-Collar Baltimore: New American Realism

October 17 – November 16, 2019

Opening Reception: October 17, 2019, 6 – 8 p.m.

Ethan Cohen Gallery is pleased to present **Tony Shore's** first major solo exhibition in New York City, titled **Blue-Collar Baltimore: New American Realism**. The show encompasses the Baltimore-based artist's body of work created between 2005 and 2019 that documents working-class American life.

Tony Shore's upbringing in a working-class neighborhood in Southwest Baltimore informs large scale, masterful velvet paintings of blue-collar American life. His autobiographical paintings of family, gang violence, and street crime can be hard to look at, but they are expressed with a grace that can only come from intimate, first-hand experience. The subjects in his paintings are friends, family members, and people of the neighborhood who have lived and experienced the scenes he depicts. Shore's work records the scenes of injustice, racism, and poverty with immense sincerity, compassion, and mastery of technique.

Known for his acrylic paintings on black velvet, Tony Shore elevates a medium often written off as kitsch or lowbrow. In his own words, "I make black velvet paintings about people who would own black velvet paintings", approaching the viewer with a humor that balances against the serious subject matter of his work. In his painting, *Fucked Up*, a large scale, well-composed image of a black man, outnumbered, being beaten up and filmed in the process, is an unhinged display of the current social crisis of racism, which the artist created in response to the events in Charlottesville. As Barry Nemett describes in the catalogue essay for Tony Shore's recent exhibition at the York College Art Galleries, "the artist [is] shoving our potential inhumanity in our collective face. [...] To ignore is to accept."

In numerous other paintings, Shore gives nobility in his rendering of his father, Harry. Harry is not glorified, but is painted as he is: sitting in stoops, lighting up cigarettes, and administering in-home dialysis on himself. The recurring figure and the intimate portraits of his aunts and other family figures are a gentle reminder of community and friendship within impoverished Baltimore. Shore's paintings are both shocking and seductive in their content, depiction, and skill.

Tony Shore is a new talent who draws upon his study of the great masters that precede him, Goya, Rembrandt, Caravaggio, as well as Hopper, and he uses their technique on black velvet fabric, a medium that is associated with kitsch and low-brow Americana. Yet Shore brings a freshness and power to the medium, and gives the viewer a realistic glimpse into blue-collar Baltimore.

TONY SHORE

1971 Born in Baltimore, MD

Tony Shore is the Chair of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art where he has been a professor since 2000. His many awards and honors include being a recipient of a Franz and Virginia Bader Fund grant, a winner of the Janet & Walter Sondheim Prize and the Bethesda Painting Prize, as well as several Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Awards. Shore has recently exhibited his works in a solo show at the York College Art Galleries. In addition to receiving his bachelor of fine arts at MICA, Shore studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and received his MFA from the Yale University School of Art.



Tony Shore, *Date*, acrylic on velvet, 44 x 38 in