

JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture

Vaughn Spann Explores the "Friend Zone"

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We have a massive soft spot for the contagious drive of the artistic community is a feast for our eyes, heart, and mind. Currently on view at Half Gallery in NYC is Friend Zone, curated by the renowned artist Vaughn Spann, an informal celebration of that same community we speak of, presenting a selection of 40-ish original artworks by almost 40, mostly NYC-based artists working today.

"I feel like far too often, exhibitions are over contrived with heavy philosophical text for what the 'show' is about," Spann told Juxtapoz about the concept around which this show revolved. "This wasn't that. The common thread was energy." In that vein, Friend Zone carries this spontaneous, lighthearted feel to it, successfully transcending the vibrant dynamics of the art community into a gallery space.

Although not available for in-person hangouts and social interactions over the past year, Spann kept in touch with his colleagues, and the mandatory "which artists are you looking at right now" sparked the idea about putting this show together. "We've been dealing with the pandemic for what feels like a lifetime, so many artists have been experimenting on new things in their studios, and I really wanted to provide a platform to show what they've been up to," Spann explained.

And the feeling of current times is certainly something that is imbued through the works included in the show. Whether it's Anthony Cudahy's melancholic portraiture, Eddie Martinez timeless floral arrangement, Katharina Olschbaur's celebration of closeness and intimacy, Oli Epp's graphically simplified exaggeration of reality, Mike Lee's glitchy renditions of the vectorized life outdoors, or Danielle McKinney's or Anna Weyant's snapshots of solitude, it's easy for most of us to relate to these images. "Each artist just had a spark, one that felt like they were on the cusp of something great and fighting for something with purpose. I was very happy to spark some intergenerational dialogue. We need more of that right now," Spann said.

"I've been oscillating between the role of the artist, curator, collector for some time now," he continued. "My first curated exhibition being Kaleidoscope at Kravets & Wehby right out of Yale. It's always a bit stressful curating an exhibit because there are so many different personalities to work with. Many of the artists in the show are in different stages of their careers and had various needs. I aimed to be a resource by being transparent as possible about the art world and answering questions from emerging artists." —Sasha Bogojev