

Press Release

Henry Taylor. FROM SUGAR TO SHIT

Hauser & Wirth Paris

14 October 2023 – 7 January 2024



Hauser & Wirth's inaugural exhibition in Paris will debut new works by critically acclaimed Los Angeles artist Henry Taylor, whose major career survey arrives at The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York on 4 October 2023 and will remain on view through January 2024. Taylor's exhibition in Paris, the artist's first prominent show in France, will comprise a wide range of over 20 paintings and sculptures encompassing the remarkable breadth of his practice. Throughout his four-decade long career, Taylor has consistently and simultaneously embraced and rejected the tenets of traditional painting, as well as any formal label. Combining figurative, landscape and history painting, alongside drawing, installation and sculpture, Taylor's vast body of highly personal work is rooted in the people and communities closest to him, often manifested together with poignant historical or pop-culture references. In this exhibition, with a guiding sense of human connection, Taylor leads us through a multifaceted narrative in sculpture and painting.

In the lead up to this show, Taylor extended his studio practice to Paris for a residency in the city during the months of June and July 2023. During this time, Taylor has drawn inspiration from the unparalleled array of historical art collections contained in the city, such as the Musée D'Orsay where he was surrounded by the work of French Impressionists, Expressionists and Fauvists who have inspired him since an early age. Taylor's studied awareness of his art historical predecessors is continually prevalent throughout his work, having previously painted versions of works by Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Phyllida Barlow, Philip Guston, Gerhard Richter, David Hammons and Glenn Ligon, among others.

Sculpture plays an important role in this exhibition and as part of Taylor's practice. The process involves energetically building, stacking and affixing a vast array of collected objects together, from bottle caps to toilet paper rolls, to create a holistic record of his everyday routine and the materials that define them.

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Referring to this highly intuitive process as ‘hunting and gathering,’ the artist is able to simultaneously merge multiple references—historic and contemporary—into sharp focus. Examples featured in the Paris show include assemblages made using milk bottles, bicycle wheels and baseball bats which recode the forms and symbolisms of found materials to comment on enduring art historical tropes, echoing an almost Duchamp-esque approach to readymade sculpture. When paired with Taylor’s paintings depicting various figures throughout history, these works reveal the artist’s voracious sourcing of subjects and materials, as well as his encyclopaedic command of historical knowledge. Also on view in the exhibition is a monumental sculpture entitled ‘One tree per family’ (2023), a towering 15ft tree trunk with a large afro for foliage.



Taylor’s work is primarily about relationships and how they impact our lives. While people figure prominently in his work, the artist rejects the label of portraitist. The paintings in this exhibition include subjects from all walks of life and historical context, frequently featuring family members, as seen in ‘I got brothers ALL OVA the world but they forget we’re related’ (2023), a depiction of Taylor’s brothers painted against a graphic backdrop displaying the word ‘VICTORY,’ resembling the logo of the classic American bubble gum brand. Taylor is known for his playful visual and verbal punning, as symbols slip between different representations in his work: the allusion to bubblegum is a nod to the subjects’ youth, while also celebrating their graduation day. Additionally on show, ‘Father, Son, Fun’ (2023) depicts Martin Luther King Jr. playing baseball with a child, ‘Another country,’ Ben Vereen’ (2023) portrays American actor, dancer and singer Ben Vereen and a painting made during Taylor’s time in Paris in homage to Josephine Baker, the American-born French dancer, singer, actress and civil rights activist often considered to be the first Black superstar. Taylor’s choice of subject—from memory and archival materials to the live sitter—is firmly dependent upon his sense of connection driven by empathy. His sumptuous depictions, painted rapidly and loosely, capture his subject’s nuances and mood with gestures and passages of flat, saturated acrylic colour offset by areas of rich and intricate detail. The intensity with which he paints is reflected by his brushwork: a network of kinetic strokes that seek to capture a feeling before it flees. Taylor’s subjects, which range from members of the Black community to symbolic objects representative of historical struggle, span the breadth of the human condition; each work is a holistic visual biography and permanent record of a person or people’s history.

About the artist

Henry Taylor lives and works in Los Angeles CA. Taylor’s work has recently been featured in US group exhibitions ‘I’m yours: Encounters with Art in Our Times’ at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Boston MA and ‘Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America’ at New Museum, New York NY. In 2022, a major survey exhibition dedicated to Henry Taylor, ‘Henry Taylor: B Side,’ his largest to date, was recently

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exhibited at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA and will travel to The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY from 4 October 2023 until 28 January 2024. Taylor has been the subject of numerous exhibitions in the United States and internationally, and his work is in prominent public collections including the Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris, France, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx NY, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh PA, The Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles CA, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston MA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles CA, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York NY, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA, Museum of Fine Art, Houston TX, Museum of Modern Art, New York NY, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham NC, Pérez Art Museum, Miami FL, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco CA, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York NY, and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY. In 2018, Taylor was the recipient of The Robert De Niro, Sr. Prize in 2018 for his outstanding achievements in painting. Taylor's work was presented at the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY in 2017 and the 58th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy in 2019.

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Gallery hours:

Tuesday to Saturday
9 am – 6 pm

www.hauserwirth.com

Caption and courtesy information:

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Henry Taylor
I got brothers ALL OVA the world but they forget
we're related
2023
Acrylic on canvas
213.4 x 243.8 x 7.9 cm / 84 x 96 x 3 1/8 in
Photo: Keith Lubow

Henry Taylor
One tree per family
2023
Mixed media
457.2 x 152.4 x 121.9 cm / 180 x 60 x 48 in
Photo: Jeff McLane

Henry Taylor
Blue Me
2022
Mixed media
254 x 109.2 x 152.4 cm / 100 x 43 x 60 in
Photo: Jeff McLane

Henry Taylor
Father, Son, Fun
2022
Acrylic on canvas
182.9 x 152.4 x 4.4 cm / 72 x 60 x 1 3/4 in
Photo: Jeff McLane

Henry Taylor
For those... who ask, 'Do you paint white people?'
2022
Acrylic on canvas
122.2 x 91.4 x 3.8 cm / 48 1/8 x 36 x 1 1/2 in
Photo: Jeff McLane