

It's Nice That

Brian Alfred's latest exhibition ponders an Earth void of humans

We talk to the painter about his new solo show currently on view at Miles McEnery Gallery in New York City.

By Joey Levenson | 22 April 2022



Meditation Field, 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 50 x 60 inches

Brian Alfred is somewhat of a twenty-first century polymath: artist, podcaster, writer and musician. Growing up in Pennsylvania, Brian pursued his passion for painting throughout his time at university and MFA degrees, which eventually (of course) led him to the artistic mecca of New York City. "My work is pretty much about our world and the world is my inspiration," the painter tells us. His latest solo show, *Escape Plan*, on view at Miles McEnery Gallery in New York, displays Brian's eye for the world around him in fantastic fashion. In the rich colours and forms of Brian's hand, the dichotomy of life is on full display. As with most of Brian's work, *Escape Plan* discreetly works in the world's everyday contrasts into the deceptively minimal paintings.

“I usually start by looking, and gathering images and ideas as I come across them,” Brian says on his general artistic process. By cultivating links between different images and ideas he observes out in the world, Brian formulates “meaning through collective”. But, it’s not a process that’s set in stone for the artist, as he oscillates between letting images lead to a theme and letting the idea of a theme lead him to the images. “For example, I may see a news piece on cameras in the workplace which could lead me to looking up surveillance cameras, and that would lead to reading about the phenomenon of surveillance,” he explains. “I then would start by collecting images or by taking photos and sketching things out on the computer.” What results is a flurry of work on those images: collages, animations or paintings. “All the different ways I work influences each other and the non-linear process feels great to me.”

A few standouts of Brian’s favourite pieces on display at Escape Plan include Moderna and Meditation Field. “The body of work is all about the duality of being quarantined and wanting to escape,” he tells us. “Moderna is a matter of fact image of a lab, which is sterile and cold and outside the window is the colorful and beautiful nature that I was pining to get back to.” It’s what Brian describes as an interesting duality, a “monotonous analytical focus to free ourselves to be carefree” in the age of Covid-19. “Meditation Field is an image of a fictional flower field that is a peaceful rumination on not having to worry,” he adds on his other standout piece. “It’s also devoid of humans, so a bit eerie in a sense if interpreted as a post-human undisturbed pastoral landscape.” Whilst it remains a question posed many times, Brian pushes forward the evergreen quandary, “would the world be a better place without humans?”

Overall, Brian wants people to look at his work and ask questions. He wants them to “feel duality in things, the nuance, how nothing is black nor white.” It’s certainly evident in Brian’s work that this is the case, whether it be the “environment, science, technology, industrialisation, urban expanse”. Brian is always remaining analytical and observational. “I want the viewer to look at two sides of every subject. I think we are better off as a society when people look at things from different angles.”



Amazon, 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 24 inches