

HESSE FLATOW



Nat Meade, *Poise*, 2026 (detail). Oil on hemp, 48 x 42 inches (121 x 106 cm). Courtesy of the artist and HESSE FLATOW, New York. Photo: ©Jenny Gorman.

Nat Meade: *Franklin*

March 20 - April 18, 2026

HESSE FLATOW is pleased to announce the opening of *Franklin*, an exhibition of paintings and works on paper by Nat Meade, marking his third solo presentation with the gallery.

The emotional arc of life's struggles and triumphs take shape within Meade's figurative works, reflecting the artist's everyday experiences as he navigates being a father, partner, and academic. Far from portraits of actual individuals, his protagonists mirror timeless archetypes. At times, we encounter a lone traveler searching for existential validation; at other times, we see through intergenerational dynamics. This allegorical distance via painting provides a realm for Meade to explore personal challenges through absurd, somber, and humorous tropes, while also furnishing a space rife with human nature that bears unequivocal resonance.

Meade's reflections on his relationship with his father after his recent passing, and subsequent reevaluations of his own role as a parent percolate throughout the works in the exhibition. Vulnerability, pain, and mortality are themes Meade does not shy away from, yet the introduction of younger males in this body of work casts a sense of hope, acceptance, reconciliation, and renewal.

Faced with a pair of dangling legs from a cloud in *Poise*, we question whether a figure is ascending or descending from the heavens, a suggestion perhaps on the interchangeability of birth and death, be it physical or spiritual. Ghostly specters hover over certain individuals – a metaphor for inherited trauma and release. In the same way that a soul peels away from an expiring body in classic cartoons, we observe a spirit looking back on itself with what might be happiness or regret. The exhibition's title *Franklin* is a subtle nod to the 1974 horror film *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, known for its portrayal of a deranged patriarchal family. Meade embraces this inner turmoil of contending with one's violent and antagonistic impulses as his characters are visibly sublimated or put in their place. A vulture picking away at a corpse recalls the eternal punishment of Prometheus by Zeus, while a bearded figure on his hands and knees echoes William Blake's portrayal of *Nebuchadnezzar*, condemned for his lust for power.

In contrast to the adults, Meade's younger figures appear more harmonious. A young boy charts his own path as he steers a boat with a radiant torch, unclouded by societal and familial pressures. A sense of childlike wonder and adventure beholds an adolescent ankle-deep in a secluded cove, reaching in to touch the sea floor brilliantly covered in starfish, anemones, and muscles. In a related work, we observe two pairs of legs belonging

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to father and son in the same shallow pool, one tenderly guiding the other. Having in the past shown his figures wrestling with or victims of forces of nature, physically being overtaken by turbulent wind and crashing waves, Meade's focus on calmer seas signals a turning point. He recognizes the need to acknowledge one's rocky histories in order to heal and release future generations from similar burdens. Despite what may seem like an insurmountable heaviness, he reminds us of the stubborn resilience of human nature, making progress attainable.

Nat Meade (b. 1975, Greenfield, MA) received his BFA from the University of Oregon and his MFA from Pratt Institute. His work has shown in numerous group and solo exhibitions nationally and internationally, including HESSE FLATOW, New York; Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg; M+B, Los Angeles; DC Moore Gallery, New York; Taymour Grahne, London; L21 Gallery, Mallorca, among others. His works have been reviewed in publications such as *Artforum*, *Juxtapoz*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Hyperallergic*. He attended the Skowhegan School for Painting and Sculpture 2009, the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program in 2016, the Siena Art Institute in 2018, and the James Castle House Summer Residency in Boise, Idaho in Summer 2021. He lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.

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HESSE FLATOW is a gallery and curatorial platform founded by artist Karen Hesse Flatow in 2019. It had its start as "Crush Curatorial", where many artists we work with today had their debut solo show. Hesse Flatow has an MBA and an MFA from Columbia University and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. The program focuses on emerging and mid-career artists with diverse voices, presenting debut solo shows and focused presentations. We are located in an accessible ground floor space in Tribeca, New York City.