

Anthony Cudahy: *Burn Across the Breeze*

Exhibition Dates: January 10 - February 21, 2021

Opening: Sunday, January 10 @ 11am - 7pm  
103 Allen Street (@ Delancey), LES

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Anthony Cudahy, *Us (with Jacob's Ladder, Apocalypse Tree, Lion)*, 2020, oil and acrylic on canvas 72h x 60w inches

1969 Gallery presents *Burn Across the Breeze*, Anthony Cudahy's second solo exhibition at the gallery, consisting of recent paintings and works on paper made during the past twelve months.

When confronted with trauma, one might have different responses: to react and hope for an immediate fix; or to wait, gather information and make an informed decision. Reflecting back on his husband Ian Lewandowski's past cancer diagnosis, Cudahy compares the news of the pandemic to a perpetual waiting room. The purgatorial space is a common theme in Cudahy's paintings, often showing figures waiting, or sometimes completing a lengthy task.

In *Painful Unknotting*, a woman sits at a table with a knotted rope and a knife. She has dedicated herself to the unknotting of this rope, the escape of a situation. She works with her hands in an attempt to complete the task calmly, but the knife looms in the frame, suggesting that a violent act may be the only means of escape. In *Cut the World*, the knife motif is repeated. This time a woman confronts the viewer, with knife in hand. Is she the same woman... deciding to take a more direct approach to solving her problems? Or is she threatening the viewer, becoming the protector of these spaces and the figures that inhabit them?

Cudahy's artistic practice relies heavily upon the collection of images and research. In *Tapestry Gazers*, a group of three, with their backs turned to us, look upon the 14th century French *Apocalypse Tapestry*. The poses are reminiscent of a group watching television, waiting for news of safety. In the foreground leans a bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*), another motif in this exhibition. This orchid is well known for having evolved to look like the bee which pollinated it, but now that the bee has become extinct, it



self-pollinates — leaving the image of the bee as a memorial of what was. This orchid acts as a fourth person in the painting, looking on the tapestry.

Many of the images in *Burn Across the Breeze* come directly from Anthony's own photographs, along with his collection of found images, ranging from the vernacular to the art historical, including the archive of his great uncle's photographs (an archive which Ian has been compiling). In *Crowd (day and night)*, Cudahy paints from a collection of viral photographs of groups of people breaking COVID-19 protocols in the summer, such as images of parties on Fire Island or the large crowds that gathered in Greenwich Village on the first sunny day of lockdown. The images took on a new meaning in the year 2020 — instead of the protective circles that these groups once symbolized in Cudahy's paintings, they are made frantic and toned with different lights, symbolizing an anxiety that crowds of people now represent.

Referencing Sonic Youth's song '*Cross the Breeze*, the title of the exhibition confronts 2020's immense feeling of danger in the air, from the invisible, airborne COVID-19, to the more literal idea of "burning the breeze" (moving quickly), through the pandemic, through political unrest, through an election — the way we sped through the year, bearing witness to the repetition of trauma that allowed the months to pass in the blink of an eye. During the beginning of COVID-19, Cudahy's studio building was closed, preventing him from working on large-scale works. As soon as lockdown lifted, he painted *Us (with Jacob's Ladder, Apocalypse Tree, Lion)*. This painting depicts Cudahy and Ian embracing in an exterior space. Around the figures are a collection of images including parts of Helen Frankenthaler's *Jacob's Ladder*, a lion eating its tail from the *Bayeux Tapestry* and a tree from the *Apocalypse Tapestry*. The images around Anthony and Ian are painted in a tighter way, contrasting the airy space around the two of them. This painting symbolizes the lifting of a fog, resiliency and new hope for the future.

**Anthony Cudahy** (b. 1989) is a painter in Brooklyn, NY. He is currently enrolled in Hunter College's MFA program. In 2018, he presented a solo exhibition, *Night Paintings*, at 1969 Gallery (NY, NY) and in 2019 was in 2-person shows at both Monya Rowe Gallery (NY, NY) and at NO Foundation (Toronto). He has been in group shows at Hales New York, Mammoth Contemporary, Kapp Kapp Philadelphia, Perrotin New York, James Fuentes, Gildar Gallery, 68projects (Berlin), Danese/Corey, and ATHICA, among others. His work has also been featured and reviewed in publications including Brooklyn Rail, GAYLETTER, Cultured Mag, Painters on Paintings, Strange Fire Collective, Mossless, and the Paris Review. In 2017 Dashwood Books released *Vigil (RHYTHM) Vigil*, a volume of his paintings alongside photographs by his husband Ian Lewandowski, which was in 2018 featured in the Queering Space exhibition at Alfred University.

