



Installation view, "Richard Kennedy: STREET PROPHECY," 2020.  
BERLIN

## Richard Kennedy

PERES PROJECTS  
Karl-Marx-Allee 82  
May 7–June 12, 2020

Richard Kennedy's paintings and sculptures might be seen as an avatar, or extension, of his operas. For his 2019 show "(G)hosting" at Peres Projects, the artist presented an opera showcasing his talents in choreography and scenography, and narrated in four acts a murderous queer romance that begins on a dating app (an iPhone doubles as the work's filming device). Reflecting on the entangled, racialized subject positions of the two characters (played by Kennedy and Christopher Argodale) and the language that both describes and scaffolds intimate affairs, Kennedy's presentations regularly probe the fraught relationship between the Western cultural canon and Black experience.

The artist's new show "Street Prophecy" comprises nine new paintings, three busts, and a pair of soft sculptures of painted top and overalls (all works 2020). The canvases display Kennedy's foray into wild, kinetic color, in contrast to his previous monochromatics from 2019, and show Abstract Expressionist brushstrokes layered under words drawn from the vernacular of queer club life. In the paintings *AZEALIA* and *STUN STUN*, the canvases are awash in brushstrokes of vibrant pinks, plums, grays, and ice blues, and epithets including "BLACK UNICORN" and "STUNT QUEEN"—signifiers that can be derisive or empowering, depending on the speaker. Kennedy's approach sees words as an active, transitive force capable of adapting to a variety of contexts, whether it be the street, the club, or the gallery. The artist also recognizes that his works function as luxury objects, on sale in essentially a high-end retail space, which nevertheless repel fixed legibility and vibrate with colored luminosity. They gesture toward Kennedy's larger operatic *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which thrives when the threshold of where the signification of the Black and queer body is permitted representation is pressured to its breaking point.

— Geoffrey Mak