

rated

ART

Spring 2023

A McQueen Agency Publication

**Meet
Johnny Taylor**
AN ARTIST Q&A

**Gallery Merrick
Celebrates
5 Years!**

**Say Hello to
Our Newest
Signed Artists**

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LET'S CELEBRATE

Art!

AGENCY DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Let's Celebrate Art!

Hello, and welcome to our premier issue of ratedART, a McQueen Agency publication!

If you know me, you know my great and unwavering love of the arts. It's a community that, as a kid, supported and celebrated me, and as an adult, inspired me to do the same for others. It's why, today, we're launching ratedART, a newsletter showcasing the amazing visual artists and advocates I've had the pleasure of both representing and admiring.

Historically, visual artists have been left to fend for themselves when it comes to the business side of their careers. If an artist is lucky enough to have their work sold in a gallery, that alleviates some of the pressure, but even then, many artists are still left looking for support. Support that, frankly, doesn't exist. Until now!

McQueen Agency is proud to be the first—and as far as we know, the only—international agency exclusively dedicated to representing visual artists. As a long-time collector, I truly



Jared Tabler, photo by Aaron Pedersen.

believe that visual arts are an essential component of our culture. It provides commentary on the affairs of the day and reflects back to us our own humanity in ways we'd sometimes rather ignore than face head-on. Athletes, actors, and musicians all have agents to help guide their careers, handle business negotiations, and contracts—and now visual artists do as well!

ratedART is our quarterly digital publication created to share the stories of these artists, connect us as a visual arts community, and celebrate the incredible work being created around the world. Up until today, the only thing missing has been you.

Welcome to McQueen Agency. Let's celebrate art!

- Jared

ARTIST Q&A

Meet Johnny Taylor



Johnny Taylor

Reinvent yourself, but know where you're coming from. It's a big ask and one that artist Johnny Taylor knows intimately. Having recently moved to New York from Vancouver, he's been rediscovering the simplicity of painting from a place of discovery. The result? *Kinetic Zen*, a dynamic series that explores finding harmony and flow on the move. As you'll soon discover, it was a process both intentional and instinctual, revealing gratitude for what was, excitement for what is, and hope for what's to come. Meet Johnny Taylor...

When you were first starting out, what was it about the arts that made you feel like it could be your community?

I've been surrounded by art and artists my whole life, so it feels second nature to me. Both of my grandparents on my mother's side were renowned painters from Hungary, and some of that creative blood passed straight into me for sure. As well, my dad was a gallery curator with a wealth of knowledge of art history and had tons of artist friends around all the time while I was growing up. The enviable collection of works he'd inherited throughout his life were also always in my sightline.

You've described yourself as "a mark-maker at heart." What is it about that gestural language that suits you and the themes you're drawn to?

I like that with mark-making there's an agreement that you relinquish a certain amount of control. On the one hand, you are expressing yourself very directly and automatically. For me that means smashes and hacks from bladed tools, paint straight from the tube, smearing and dragging with oil

sticks and squeegees, etc. On the other hand, the materials always have their own say when you're mark-making and most often won't do exactly what you'd hoped. That means having to act decisively, then working with the anomalies and accidents along the way. The marks sort of become their own thing you can stop at and take in, while also representing something in the bigger picture—it points the viewer toward the painting being an object in and of itself, as opposed to creating a viewing window or illustrating a subject. I love the moments where you see a struggle, or challenge, or breakthrough because there's some unfiltered physical evidence that's been captured.

What would you say were the 3 biggest influences that living in New York had on this body of work?

I definitely shifted my mindset immediately in New York. I was very aware right away that I was completely anonymous and able to disappear into the fabric of the city. It was a strange feeling knowing that I now lived there but wasn't yet feeling a real connection to the place.

I felt like a method actor for a while, with this detached voyeuristic outlook, trying to get to a place within where I could leave my old artistic identity behind. I kept asking myself: *What would happen if I didn't know what a "Johnny Taylor" was supposed to look like? What if I could remove the artist from the art?* I wanted to explore the relevancy of that. I tried to fool myself away from my old gestures and mechanics, the ways of painting I would default to in the past.

What has your move to New York (and subsequent "reset") taught you about yourself?

I've been called an empath of environments (rather than of people) and would completely agree with this. Where I am is always in the work. A creative period like this was meant to be about absorbing the input and expressing from the energy coming at me. But I can also feel that isn't sustainable in a place with so much intensity. I can't leave the channels this wide open for too long. Fortunately, there's enough NYC content in me to sift through for a while. The next creative period will probably embrace some reflection on this time.

What is the creative process like for you? Where do you usually begin, and was that true with *Kinetic Zen*?

With *Kinetic Zen*, I tried to challenge myself to break my habits and sort of "go-to" movements and structural cues of past works. As simple as it may sound, I started from the idea of colour relationships as the subject itself with this series (something I've never done), as opposed to starting with form and delineating the space as I usually do.

I can begin a painting from wanting to express an idea, and an idea could be a line from a song maybe, or an unexpected phrase I hear that forms a title or a beginning of a vision. Sometimes I spring from that place. Other times it can be as simple as the excitement of the arrival of some new surface material, and then I'll just start with a gesture, usually a big movement, making some kind of purposeful moment. It won't be that complicated either. Maybe I'll mix a specific colour (something new or unusual), load it on a big squeegee, and put a definitive movement down, just to break the ice and get rid of the preciousness—to take away the pristine feeling of the surface. Then I feel like, "*Now I can just go for it!*" Then, subsequently, I can make my next action, my next moment, my next colour, and that's really what this series was about—reacting to these moments and having this awareness to question if I was about to react in a predictable way.



Foreseeable Future, Oil on PVC, 65 x 60, by Johnny Taylor, 2022.

“I’ve been called an empath of environments”

There was an interesting thing that happened with almost every one of these pieces. I would get about halfway through, then think to myself that it was way too controlled-looking, and would literally scrape off half the painting. What I'd be left with was a blurry, misty imprint that I rebuilt otop of. It made a dreamy kind of depth behind it all. The acrylic works were started with layers of spray on the backside that seem embedded in the material somehow. I tried to push the depth in these without relying on perspective. It's all just layers of colour in various shapes. I've always tried to convey a sense of floating, hovering, shifting, suspension. Not a solid place, not a real place, more a mind's eye vision.



New Velocity, Oil on PVC, 34 x 50, by Johnny Taylor, 2021.

When you're taking a break from a project, what will we likely find you doing?

I am a soccer nut, so I love taking an afternoon to kick a ball around and do practice drills in the park (I love fitness training in general). I definitely take time exploring New York with my wonderful partner in crime, Amy, taking in art shows and finding new neighbourhoods. We're always on the hunt for a great coffee (I am that coffee-geek guy for sure) or a great slice of NY pizza (I have a whole list of places I've rated). When I'm fully chilling, you'll find me on the couch with my cat, reading some Murakami :)

Tell us about a lesson you've had to learn more than once.

I need to slow down.

“I need to slow down.”

What makes you hopeful these days?

After this struggle through the pandemic the past few years, I'd like to think that we could come to a new, deeper respect and appreciation of the basic joys of being able to connect and communicate again in real life and real time. Meeting each other with openness and softness and curiosity.

Even in my work (and I rarely get political), I found myself reacting with frustration to this modern climate of normalizing misinformation, and a lot of it seems wrapped in a sense of isolation compounded by the digital pathways we're treading. Posts, Zooms, Tweets, Amazon orders—whatever the endless online loops. I think it might take some time and effort, but getting our feet back on the ground into our neighbourhoods, communities, and physical spaces that we've built as places to share with others is a step in the right direction. Even something like an art opening that we can all actually show up for again is something I certainly don't take for granted and am very thankful for.

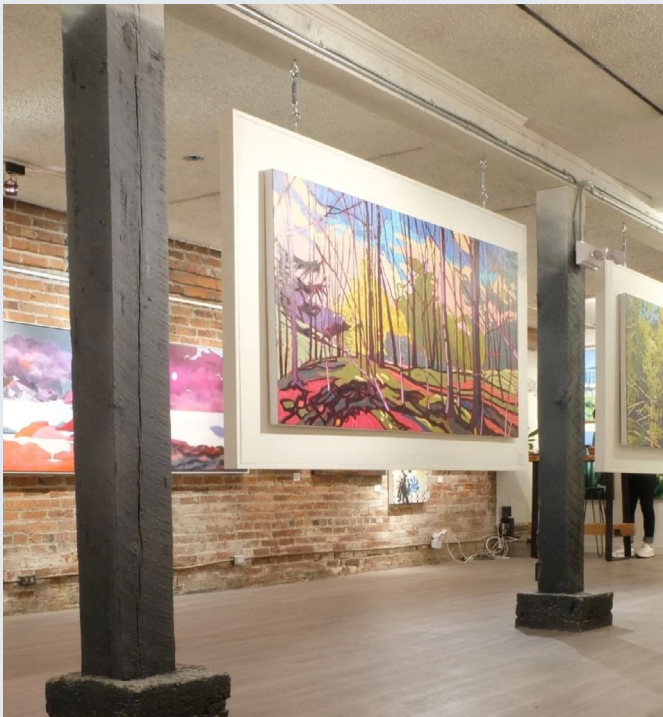
Discover more of Johnny Taylor's current work [here](#), and give him a follow on [Instagram!](#)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Gallery Merrick Celebrates 5 Years!



Joe Bembridge, owner and curator of Gallery Merrick.



Gallery Merrick

We love a celebration almost as much as we love [Gallery Merrick](#). And a celebration is exactly what owner and curator Joe Bembridge threw, April 1st, in honour of the gallery's five-year anniversary (and first year in its new location). Never been? Well, be sure to change that the next time you're visiting downtown Victoria. The century-old building offers the perfect contrast to the Canadian contemporary fine art you'll find inside. While there, be sure to say hello to Joe, who's always excited to make every visitor feel acknowledged, informed, and inspired.

Learn more about Joe Bembridge and Gallery Merrick [here!](#)



A SPARK OF INSPIRATION

Ground Swimming, *by Alyson Davies*

Edmonton-based (Amiskwacîwâskahikan, Treaty 6 territory) visual artist **Alyson Davies** handmade this stop-motion animation in the early days of the pandemic so that her imagination could go swimming while she was without access to a pool. **Check it out!**

NOW REPRESENTING

Say Hello to Our Newest Signed Artists!

We couldn't be more excited to welcome these nine fabulous artists to the agency. Please say hello and give a follow to:

- + *Jordan Baraniecki*
- + *Patricia Gascon*
- + *Lori Goldberg*
- + *Lisa Graziotto*
- + *Josie Michaud*
- + *Meaghan Ogilvie*
- + *Kevin "Freakshow" O'Quinn*
- + *Trevor Schmidt*
- + *David Tycho*

Ask the Agency

At McQueen Agency, questions are one of our favourite things. They spark conversations, relationships, and ultimately allow us to indulge in our favourite topic: art! Here's the answer to one question we get all the time.

Q As an artist management agency, how do you work with artists?

A We work with our artists to sell their work, find them opportunities for exhibitions or art fairs, and to place their work with galleries. We help them with strategy, pricing, performance coaching, and managing the business side of their careers—including negotiating contracts and securing opportunities for them to build their brand and grow their careers.

Have a question for us? Send it to info@mcqueenagency.com and you could see it answered in our next issue.

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