

# OCTAVIA

ART GALLERY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Aaron Collier: *Of Rocks and Ruins*

October 6 – October 27, 2018

Opening reception: October 6, 6 – 8 pm, during *Art for Arts' Sake*

Octavia Art Gallery is pleased to present Aaron Collier: *Of Rocks and Ruins*.

The “Everything You Need to Know” website that intends to prepare visitors for the breezy summit and scenic overlook of Palatine Hill in Rome offers the following caution: “*Without a guide or guidebook, it can be difficult to make sense of the ruins of the Palatine... you don’t want to be one of those tourists who wanders aimlessly around the hill, with no idea of what they’re looking at.*” Failing to click on the host of supplied links for guide services made available to me by this website, I became “*one of those tourists*” in September of 2017.

The difficulty of making sense of the excavations and remains drove me up that hill. The promise of innumerable fragments, pieces, and ruins (nothing fully intact or scatheless) was the reward of the climb, not the handicap. A profound inability to explain away or see through every layer was the experience and the seat that I hoped to find, one of bewilderment and mystery. This act of looking is one that prizes possibility and questions, rather than answers and identification.

My professional practice as a visual artist is one that implements several modes of image making towards braving the central questions that drive my research: what am I to do with a small and incomplete knowledge of a vast, complex, and multivalent world? What of challenge or gain accompanies an incomplete knowledge of the world? How are images, which are inherently shards or snippets of information, able to picture this inability to know in full?

Abstraction, marked as it is by the ability to be both suggestive and silent, proves to be a fitting vehicle for exploring the possibility of paint to simultaneously reveal and conceal. This dichotomy parallels a shifting, evolving world where what we know consistently shares an edge with what we do not. Paintings in *Of Rocks and Ruins* layer observed positive shapes and negative spaces from historical works such as Leonardo’s *Virgin of the Rocks* and Hendrick Goltzius’ *Pieta* to the degree that the individual and original referent becomes difficult to delineate. Piecing together a knowledge or experience of something through remaining or available fragments mimics our daily interactions with the world. Rather than suggest that these interactions foreground a certain lack or shortcoming, I wonder if incomprehensibility can ever be a source of joy?

– Aaron Collier

Aaron Collier is a visual artist living in New Orleans. He teaches drawing and painting at Tulane University as an Assistant Professor. This is Aaron’s first solo exhibition at Octavia Art Gallery. Previous solo exhibitions of his work have occurred at Cole Pratt Gallery and Staple Goods, an artist-run gallery in the St. Claude Avenue Arts District of New Orleans. He has participated in recent group exhibitions at The Clemente in New York and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans. Additionally, his work has been featured in *New American Paintings* and is represented in such collections as the New Orleans Museum of Art, Iberia Bank, and the Boston Medical Center. Collier has been awarded artist residencies by the Ragdale Foundation, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Joan Mitchell Center (New Orleans), ISCP (Brooklyn), and Open Ateliers Zuidoost (Amsterdam).