

## SHAUNTÉ GATES

*Poppies & Parachutes III: We Should Be Flying by Now*

16 November 2024 - 05 January 2025

*Two Archers, Showboats, and a Pig Float, 2024*Paint, photography, medium transfers, collage, colored pencils, thread on wood panel  
121.9 x 182.9 cm (48 x 72 in)

Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery is delighted to announce the first solo exhibition of Shaunté Gates in Paris, titled *Poppies & Parachutes III: We Should Be Flying by Now*, from Saturday, November 16, 2024, to January 5, 2025.

Shaunté Gates' work is a collision between fantasy and reality, exploring the power of myth, perception, and the subconscious mind through lucid dreaming and processes that align with surrealism.

"We Should Be Flying by Now" draws inspiration from Guy Debord's 1967 book, "The Society of the Spectacle". In Shaunté Gates' work, the concept of "The Society of the Spectacle" manifests through vivid, surreal landscapes where media, technology, consumer culture, and theater merge to blur the line between reality and illusion. His compositions, reminiscent of paper theater, reflect a world dominated by the spectacle, turning individuals into passive observers of their own existence, entrapped by the overwhelming influence of imagery and digital constructs. Yet, embedded within these works is the metaphor of self-awareness—the theory that "We Should Be Flying by Now." This series follows a band of charioteers, seemingly Olympians, navigating their way through "The Spectacle." The charioteer symbolizes calmness, self-control, and mastery of the mind and psyche, ever-changing and unstable. This idea serves as a call for awakening, a realization that humanity, like charioteers, must take control of its own destiny, steering through the distortions of the spectacle toward liberation and authentic experience. Gates' art critiques how identity and experience are mediated through these visual illusions while also suggesting the potential for individuals to break free and rise above the fragmented notions of truth in a hyper-constructed world.

Gates' paintings evolved into a mixed and multimedia expression in 2004 when he began working in television as a motion graphics artist and video editor. This experience, working with images

and video footage of music artists and TV personalities to create show openings and promotional content, subtly and organically influenced his paintings, integrating elements of motion and media into his evolving artistic practice. “The relationship was reciprocal; the painter spirit was feeding the digital work and in turn my paintings. Aesthetically and thematically, I embraced the contradiction, as the paintings began to explore themes of introspection and the influence of mass media on society. I started to see the works as theatrical. As I did for television, I began photographing and casting images of family and friends as protagonists for my paintings. I take photos and find photos for other cast members and architecture, as well as capturing stills from cinema and video games to collage into these densely layered stage-like settings”. Extracting from multiple time-based media including current events, history, and cinema, perhaps paradoxically, somehow untethered from notions of linear time and space; psycho-geographical labyrinths or worlds are constructed to be deconstructed into “moments that feel to be on the brink of an unconscious truth”.

## Biography

Shaunté Gates is based in Washington, D.C., where he was born and raised. Gates Gates trained in traditional oil painting and representational portraiture early in his career. Gates’ past experience as a tattoo artist and television editor with BET Networks caused a profound shift in his artistic practice. Gates was a participating artist in Smithsonian Institution’s *Men of Change* four-year (2019-2023) traveling exhibition, spanning ten museums including California African American Museum, Cincinnati Underground Railroad Museum, and Washington State History Museum. He has many public art commissions from schools throughout D.C., including *Transcending*, a painting commemorating the 140th anniversary of Howard University School of Law. Shaunté Gates has been awarded the Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Grant (2022) and residencies with The Nicholson Project (2023), The Kennedy Center (2019) and Washington Project for the Arts (2018; 2017). Gates has works in esteemed private collections and institutions such as the Studio Museum in Harlem and Munson, Utica, NY. He presented solo exhibitions at Sperone Westwater, NY (2021 and 2023) and his first solo exhibition in Europe at Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery Luxembourg in November 2022.

Gates’ works in mixed media collage and video subverts traditional landscapes by embedding architectural elements rich with cultural symbolologies and caste categorizations. The artist’s adept use of found materials not only evokes the intrinsic energy and cultural significance of their origins but also resonates with the popular culture referenced within these works. The evolution of his collage technique, transitioning from canvas to wood, allows for a more intricate layering of diverse materials such as fabrics, canvas, paper, coins, and photographs, thereby enriching the textural and conceptual depth of his pieces.