

Morgan Presents



Willie Stewart: Constructed Pictures

April 10—June 7, 2025

Opening Thursday, April 10th, 6—8pm

537 W 27th Street, New York, NY 10001

“I want to make beautiful pictures without concrete meaning. These are the most political paintings I have ever made. Images that console you before they confront you. These paintings are like newspapers, you might read one and wrap steak in another.” — Willie Stewart

In constructing these pictures, Willie Stewart serves more as a film producer than a draughtsman. Stewart’s attention is on the creation of a multifaceted sensation, rather than the singular impression of an image. Whereas a collage is assembled of individual components in the pursuit of a central composition, Stewart’s concern is instead these components themselves. The artist layers images as superimposed film stills, each intensely legible while refuting any singular resolution of meaning. This layering constructs a feeling for the viewer—an experiential sensation exceeding linear narrative.

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In stitching together and overlaying these images, Willie Stewart has produced a Southern Blockbuster. A cinematic experience constrained to the visual, yet beneath which we can feel the reverberation of the score, and the sweat on the back of our necks from the lights. What remains ostensibly visible is a product from the edits of the cutting room floor.

The tension between the legibility of Stewart's layered images and the refutation of a singular compositional narrative in their summation, is central to the works' artistic intention. Our eye finds comfort in locating motifs and identifying their origin or source material, yet our consciousness is frustrated without a linear resolution to the relation between these images. Stewart assures us of profundity, of great meaning and import behind each element and included image, yet he leaves us only with an impression of that larger meaning: an experiential remanent beyond narrative.

These pictures are something entirely new, not only in Stewart's embrace of varied medium, but also in their primal focus on sensation, all without releasing figurative compositional structure. While these works certainly recognize their antecedents in harkening back to David Salle's Early Product Paintings of the 1990's, they are not only devoid of any such internal logic or relation between components, but also differ in their elevation of sensation over thought.

Willie Stewart (b. 1982, Gallatin, TN) lives and works in New Haven, Connecticut. He received his MFA in Sculpture from Yale University in 2018, and a BFA from The Cooper Union in 2016. His work has been the subject of solo and two-person exhibitions at Morgan Presents, New York (2022); Morán Morán, Los Angeles, CA (2023, 2019); Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York (2023, 2021); and Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, NY, with Brent Stewart (2017). Stewart completed residencies at Pioneer Works (2016), and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2014)

For press inquiries, please contact Lauren Lee at lauren@morgan-presents.com

Image: Willie Stewart, *Beasts*, 2025, Colored pencil, ink and gouache on cotton board, graphite, acrylic, oil and gouache on canvas over panel, 80 x 64 inches (203 x 162.5 cm)
— Detail