

# HEADSTONE

## *On Infinity and Being-hereeness*

Ben Estes and Jordan McDonald

November 5 - November 30

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Headstone is delighted to announce, *On Infinity and Being-hereeness*, a two-person exhibition with Ben Estes and Jordan McDonald. Writer and visual artist, Estes presents a body of green, red, and blue acrylic paintings on styrofoam, an investigation for the lightest of abstracted objectivity. Confidently nestled within the space, between the paintings, are a collection of Jordan McDonald's most humble ceramic vessels that feel like ancient artifacts yet land in timelessness. *On Infinity and Being-hereeness* draws from an authentic curiosity and sincere pursuit in the act of looking; Estes and McDonald harness this headspace, an attempt to recreate the feeling of true clarity.

Even though the elusiveness of the written language is one of his most coveted tools, Ben Estes does not stray when he's focusing on the physical materiality of his paintings. Using his detailed accounts of clouds, the sun, and trees - the fabric of the living experience- his paintings on styrofoam are the landing pads of an abstracted moment. To call something by name in an image relinquishes our ability to abstract it, or does it? Estes says,

"Abstraction needs to be an illusion of reality, which is quite different from reality itself. After nearly a decade of having given up on trying to make non-representational paintings, I instead spent my time thinking about the *representational* aspects of language and phrases (written to be read in books and used in paintings). I finally felt like I maybe had a better idea of what metaphor and abstraction meant to me after sensing that tremendous weight of light casting the cloud's shadows that afternoon, and I started making the drawings and paintings that are here in this show. Each piece is a different thought about the abstracted sky, either visually, or as with the unfolded circle drawings, materially."

These deep fixations on material and its experience are more evasive than expected. To create from a particular point in time is to attempt its recreation entirely - one's mood, perhaps hunger level, and most importantly light. This fumbling with remembered circumstances is how these paintings are created; creating until it's correct- full of correctness.

Jordan McDonald's new body of vessels is proportionally awkward, wide, and plump- a delightful dumpiness. His pots aren't immediately likable in the sense of how pottery is usually conveyed- a successful search for a degree of mastery/skill/precision- the idea of perfection? There is beauty in that sentiment- a willingness to simply be. McDonald's presence in each work is unabashedly himself, without trepidation, honoring the material in its speech and seemingly involuntary movement. Eventually, the clay is fired and transformed into ceramic, a process that will make it forever. Ceramics are an essential component of our civilization and how one understands ancient civilizations' pasts. His mark-making- brushing, wiping, dipping, and dotting- capture a story in the round, pushing out a richness that asks us to move one's body with it, around it, eventually arriving at what Gertraud Möhwald so famously wrote, "an intense stillness."

Poet, Mahmoud Darwish said, "Extreme clarity is a mystery." Estes and McDonald share a process of making that can be dissected, a quantifiable experience that is made of a few layers; frame to styrofoam to paint to brush to hand to brain to thought to seeing. This unfolding of an aesthetic suggests an appreciation for simplicity and necessity. Though gestural and emotive, the work is not attempting trickery or illusion. However, one must arrive at the 'then what?' threshold in the midst of rejecting contemporary immediacy; *On Infinity and Being-hereeness* is a desire to find newness in one's redirection of assumed knowing.

Ben Estes lives in Kingston, NY. Ben worked as the editor of *A Dark Dreambox of Another Kind*, the poems of Alfred Starr Hamilton (with Alan Felsenthal); *Together & Alone*, the photographs of Karlheinz Weinberger and the poetry anthology *On the Mesa: An Anthology of Bolinas Writers* (The Song Cave, 2021). He has shown his paintings at Situations (NYC) Whitespace (Atlanta) and Paula Cooper Gallery (NYC) among others. With Alan Felsenthal, he runs the publishing press The Song Cave.

Jordan McDonald is a ceramic artist based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Jordan grew up in the suburbs of Toronto and discovered ceramics at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario. He continued his studies at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax (BFA 2009) and the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University (MFA 2011). Among the awards and recognition that Jordan has received is the C.D. Howe Foundation Fellowship from the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts (2009), was a finalist for the RBC Emerging Artist Award (2014), and received a Recommendation Prize at the 2016 Taiwan Ceramic Biennial. His work can be found in noteworthy private and public collections including the Gardiner Museum in Toronto and the Yingge Ceramics Museum in Taipei, Taiwan. He has taught ceramics at Maryland Institute College of Art, Tyler School of Art, Temple University in Philadelphia, the Nova Scotia College of Art, and the Lunenburg School of the Arts in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Headstone is an artist-run, for-profit contemporary art gallery located in Kingston, New York, dedicated to showing two-person and solo exhibitions. The 1,100sq ft gallery space was created by artists Lauren Aitken and Chase Folsom. The gallery is deeply committed to our artists and their ideas, providing them with a beautiful contemporary space and the necessary support to help them foster and fulfill their artistic vision. It is with considerate curation and our vast love of the art world that we bring together and introduce emerging and established artists, some of who have yet to benefit from wider critical and commercial attention. We believe the arts should be equitable and accessible to anyone who would like to engage. Through artist exhibitions, we hope that Headstone can collectively bring people together, create community, expand connections and become an engaging, diverse melting pot of artists, creatives, collectors, and community members.

Opening Reception: Saturday, November 5, 5pm-8pm

Gallery Hours:  
Friday to Sunday, Noon- 5pm  
Or by appointment

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