

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

artspeak



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Chris Johanson

Possibilities

[Mitchell-Innes & Nash](#)

New York, 534 West 26th Street

San Francisco-based artist Chris Johanson is one of the key figures in Mission Art School, a 2000s art movement that circled around a group of artists among which are Margaret Kilgallen, Barry McGee, Alicia McCarthy, and Johanson himself. While most of the artists from the movement attended San Francisco Art Institute, Johanson does not come from a formal art education; however, his presence in the city's famous Mission District that began with making street art, for which he often used Sharpies, marks him as one of the lead figures.



Chris Johanson, Untitled, 2016-2017. Acrylic and household paint on found wood Courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash

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Possibilities, Johanson's second solo exhibition at Mitchell-Innes & Nash introduces his whimsical and easy-going West Coast style that has become associated with Mission Art School. Cartoonish drawings, symbols from pop culture, and figures that morph into abstraction appear in bright, sunny colors often times accompanied by text. The artist, who went into the radar of New York art scene with his participation in the 2002 Whitney Biennial, uses different found material he finds on the street, paying homage to his early days as a street artist.

“I want to share my thoughts. I really labor over the poetry of the words. I try to say complicated things in a simple way — death, existential thought processes and anxiety. And I try to decompress that, move that away and bring in more peaceful thoughts. The repetitive quality of [placing words on canvas] creates serotonin in my brain. It's like a peaceful, meditative ritual. It's something I've been doing since I was a little kid.” said Johanson in a 2013 *Los Angeles Times* interview with Deborah Vanin about his use of words in his work.