

JOHNSON LOWE GALLERY

Press Release:

Jimmy O'Neal, *Spittin' Image*

On view February 21, 2025 – April 19, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, February 21 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Johnson Lowe Gallery presents *Spittin' Image*, an exhibition featuring new paintings, drawings, and installations by Savannah-based, Atlanta-born artist Jimmy O'Neal. The show opens Friday, February 21st, from 6:00 - 8:00 PM, marking O'Neal's debut with the gallery.

"The AI generation of the moment is the spitting image of its collective societal parent—a creature of wonderment reflecting our connection to a panpsychic consciousness landscape in all its forms: digital, inner dream space, and what we consider IRL, shaped by past, present, and future simultaneously." – Jimmy O'Neal

The idiom "spitting image" has sparked debates about its origins, with theories ranging from "spit and image," referencing divine creation, to "splitting image" or "spirit and image." While these theories point to likeness, they miss the complexities of representation in a hyperreal age, where the lines between image and reality blur into simulacra. Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, as explored in *Simulacra and Simulation*, offers a key framework for understanding this shift. Hyperreality, as defined by Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation*, suggests that the boundary between the real and the simulated has dissolved, so what we perceive as "real" is, in fact, a simulation. In this world, AI, media, and technology not only mimic reality but reshape it entirely. This blurring of lines between the real and simulated runs throughout O'Neal's *Spittin' Image*, opening February 21 at Johnson Lowe Gallery in Atlanta. The artist's practice has, since the 1990's, explored AI and other cutting-edge technologies as a mirror of the society that created it, a reflection of our collective consciousness and beliefs. This reflection often stretches across the digital, dreamlike, and physical realms—creating a space where reality itself is in constant flux.

"Regardless of the technique used in these conversations, AI consistently mirrored the concept of 'spittin' image' back to me—like rhymes of our collective times." – Jimmy O'Neal

In *Spittin' Image*, O'Neal uses a variety of technological tools, primarily AI, such as image-to-image models, to explore how machines interpret concepts like "spitting" or "casting out." These interactions result in new paintings and installations that, through O'Neal's playful yet profound lens-based paint techniques, reflect the ever-shifting, multi-layered experience of contemporary life. The paintings themselves become an embodiment of this exchange, incorporating layers of a mirrorized paint engineered by the artist and fragmented imagery that reflects O'Neal's own act of physically spitting paint onto the canvas - as reimagined by AI. The act of spitting is both deeply personal and symbolic and serves as an emblem of a broader societal dialogue. Through this dialogue with AI, O'Neal creates multi-dimensional, abstract representations of time—where past, present, and future collapse and the boundaries between what we know and what we can imagine are as fluid as "reality" itself.

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About Jimmy O'Neal

Jimmy O'Neal, a classically trained painter, continually explores and expands the physical and metaphorical capabilities of the medium. Through his work he creates experiences that call forth the universal impulses of the human condition that exist underneath the surface of our consciousness. He strives to represent the unseen visual poetry of the frequencies that surround and interact with our senses. His interest in physics, science, and biology led him to develop such technological innovations as mirrored paint, which is used in the creation of large-scale paintings that are intended to envelop the viewer. He further examines science and the body in such artworks as "brain machine," a device that produces paintings generated from the artist's EEG readings in response to external stimuli.

O'Neal has exhibited in galleries and museums such as the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, and the Jacksonville Museum of Modern Art. He received his BFA in Illustration and his MFA in painting from Savannah College of Art and Design. His work has been commissioned by private and public institutions such as the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art. O'Neal is a successful public artist that has created works for the Mercedes-Benz Stadium, the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre in Atlanta, Georgia; the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS); and the Hanes Brands Theatre, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Most recently his public work *Seven Cymatic Sonata* for CATS was recognized as one of the 50 best Public Art Commissions in 2012 by The Public Art Network, a program of the Americans for the Arts.

About Johnson Lowe Gallery

Johnson Lowe Gallery champions emerging, mid-career, and established artists from our region and beyond. Our program reveres the transformative power of artistic expression, honoring the profound nature of visual language and its ability to drive personal and societal paradigm shifts.

Founded in 1989 by Bill Lowe, the gallery's extensive exhibition history includes renowned artists such as Thornton Dial, Michael David, Ida Applebroog, Markus Lupertz and Leiko Ikemura. In 2023, the gallery was re-established as Johnson Lowe Gallery under the Direction of Donovan Johnson with *The Alchemists*, a historic exhibition co-curated by Seph Rodney. This exhibition featured works by Sanford Biggers, Mark Bradford, Ebony G. Patterson, Thornton Dial, William Downs, Shanequa Gay, Trenton Doyle Hancock, and many others.

Notes to Editors

Artist: Jimmy O'Neal

Title: *Spittin' Image*

Dates: February 21, 2025 – April 19, 2025

Address:

764 Miami Cir NE #210, Atlanta, GA 30324

Hours:

Tuesday – Friday | 10:00 am – 5:30 pm

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JOHNSON LOWE GALLERY

Saturday | 11:00 am – 5:30 pm
Sunday, Monday, and Evenings by appointment

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For all media inquiries, please contact info@johnsonlowe.com

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