

JOHNSON LOWE GALLERY

Press Release:

Navin Norling, *Dangerous Games*

On view February 27, 2026 – March 28, 2026

Opening Reception: Friday, February 27th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Atlanta, Georgia – Johnson Lowe Gallery is pleased to present *Dangerous Games*, the second solo exhibition of works by Navin Norling, a California-born, Atlanta-based artist whose practice examines classic Americana imagery and assembles miscellanea out of popular culture signifiers, sayings, folklore, and materialism.

Dangerous Games emerges from a moment defined by uncertainty, repetition, and historical amnesia. The exhibition takes its title from a lowbrow French comic book from the 1960s, a phrase that initially appealed to the artist for its cinematic quality. Over time, the words took on greater weight, becoming a way to describe the social and political conditions shaping contemporary American life today. These are dangerous times, and the systems we move through every day increasingly feel like games whose rules are unstable and unevenly enforced.

Working with found materials such as old windows, scrap wood, metal, lace, and everyday objects, Norling builds layered works that reference American iconography while questioning the narratives attached to it. His use of salvaged materials connects the work to folk traditions and to street art, which he understands as a contemporary form of folk expression. Familiar surfaces and objects create an entry point, disarming the viewer through nostalgia and material recognition before revealing more complex and troubling histories beneath.

A central strategy in the exhibition is whitewashing. Surfaces are painted white, obscuring imagery and meaning, only to be scraped back, cut into, or partially removed. This process mirrors the ongoing erasure of history and culture, particularly Black and diasporic histories, within American public discourse. Lace overlays and quilt-like panels further complicate visibility, softening the surface while concealing what lies beneath. What disappears does not vanish completely. It returns in fragments, inversions, and shadows.

Quilting functions as both a formal and conceptual framework throughout the exhibition. Panel compositions read as quilts, using color blocks, patterning, and coded symbolism. These references draw on African American quilting traditions as systems of communication, survival, and resistance. Rather than producing literal quilts, Norling translates their logic into painting, sculpture, and installation, folding personal history, including the influence of his grandmother, into the work.

Recurring figures and symbols populate *Dangerous Games*: the Watcher, a Black Americana figure whose shifting gaze suggests both witness and surveillance; red, white, and blue wrestlers; angry white men; children, cherubs, dragons, charms, and amulets. Gumball machines dispense red pills, introducing chance and participation while underscoring the exhibition's framing of power as play. These elements move across works like a visual language, accumulating meaning through repetition.

The exhibition also references the upcoming semiquincentennial of the United States. Red, white, and blue appear throughout the work, not as celebration but as coded reference. Norling looks at America through an American lens shaped by travel, history, and lived experience, examining gun violence, militarization, and the persistent myth-making that allows these realities to continue. His work resists direct political messaging, instead offering layered, coded forms of protest that speak to the present while remaining rooted in a longer historical continuum.

Karen Comer Lowe, 2026

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About Navin Norling

Navin Norling (b. 1970, San Francisco, California) would spend summers on his grandfather's farm in California's Central Valley, where all resources were reused without any waste. The impact of that rural setting led him to embrace salvaged components and eventually integrate assemblage and bricolage techniques into his formal training as a painter. But apart from those summers, Navin grew up in suburban California and spent his youth in wild exploration across the Bay Area; part of a generation committed to establishing a personal aesthetic framework, whether in the use of graffiti monikers or wheat paste messaging. He has been vicariously loyal to that urban grit and has maintained a street palette in his work.

Norling's body of work encompasses paintings, sculptural objects, and installations; melanges of cacophonous iconographies developed from urban graffiti and pop imagery. In his recent work and as an extension of his exploration of bricolage, the artist has been employing a stacking technique to unite disparate, totemic fragments – modular and self-contained – that, when put together, plot out an ambitious, cohesive genealogy of collective Americana chronicles.

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: Navin Norling

Title: *Dangerous Games*

Dates: February 27, 2026 – March 28, 2026

Address:

764 Miami Cir NE #210, Atlanta, GA 30324

Hours:

Tuesday – Friday | 10:00 am – 5:30 pm

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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