

OCTOBER 27, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**KRISTOPHER RAOS –
PAINTER/PILOTO (SLOW AND
STEADY WINS THE RACE)**

969 CHUNG KING ROAD

NOVEMBER 4, 2023 –

DECEMBER 16, 2023

ARTIST'S RECEPTION:

NOVEMBER 4, 6-9pm

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Kristopher Raos, Untitled (Shell be coming around), Acrylic, Gouache, Flashe on canvas, 63.75 (L) / 84.5 (R) x 129.75 inches, 2023

Charlie James Gallery is pleased to present

Painter/Piloto (Slow and steady wins the race) featuring new work by Los Angeles artist **Kristopher Raos**. Drawing inspiration from images of vintage car racing, Raos keys into the graphic possibilities of the sport's abundant trackside banners and transforms these small moments into crisp, vibrant hard edge paintings. These works stop you in your tracks with clean lines and subtle embossed details, while at the same time giving a feeling of great velocity. All oriented as landscapes, the close cropped images have the sense of something glimpsed while zooming past at high speed, placing the viewer in the driver's seat of this stunning exhibition.

Raos brings Ellsworth Kelly to the racetrack in the exhibition's centerpiece, *Untitled (Shell be coming around)*. The trapezoidal canvas stretches across the wall as if distorted by speed, a joyfully saturated color field painting crashing into the sidewall of corporate sponsorship. Raos's paintings only *seem* fast, however: each color's rich density is realized through countless layers of paint, each hard edge painstakingly achieved by hand and eye alone. This is doubly true for Raos's signature embossed passages, which must be built up slowly and meticulously to succeed. Here, these passages also often playfully question the gravitas of professional motorsport by introducing the iconography of local Los Angeles gas stations, tire shops, and brands into the compositional field.

The visual landscape of Los Angeles is central to Raos's project and always makes itself known in the work. *Untitled (Fire Song's)* draws directly from an image of the 1966 Le Mans race, when Firestone tires and Ferodo brakes vied for ad space along the track, but here Song's Automotive Service of Silverlake Boulevard joins the fray as an embossed detail. The familiar orange globe of a 76 gas station, the

quotidian lettering of the neighborhood smog check, or the peculiar shape of a strip mall sign – Raos collects and honors these ordinary visual moments, and perhaps teaches his viewers to do the same, to find beauty in the eccentricity and glamor amid the exhaust-pipe grime.

The exhibition continues in the downstairs gallery, where it fully leaves the slick world of racing behind in favor of the ubiquitous handmade palimpsest of Los Angeles auto shop signage. The sun has set on these pictures, leaving the viewer only with glimpsed pronouncements in the inky black: SERVICE, REPAIR, TUNE-UP, ELECTRICAL, and, most provocatively, GOD. All featured text has been culled from real-world auto shops, and the installation gives the sense of paintings caught in the middle of a clandestine midnight gathering. This final series lends its title to the exhibition: “slow and steady wins the race.” While this may not always hold true on the circuit, the aphorism aptly describes Raos’s scrupulous approach to his practice. It is precisely the slowness of the process that allows these elegant compositions to shine.

Kristopher Raos (b. 1987, Bakerfield, CA) is self-taught painter based in Los Angeles, CA. Raos grew up between Bakersfield, CA and Mexico City, Mexico, his early domestic life characterized by instability and privation. He found focus in graffiti art, painting the trains that move through the agricultural landscapes of Bakersfield. His street art practice took him all over the world and ultimately led him to Los Angeles. It also shaped his name, RAOS being his former graffiti moniker which he adopted as his surname. A visit to LA’s Museum of Contemporary Art in 2007 was formative, as Raos saw Ellsworth Kelly’s works for the first time and became fascinated w Minimalism and hard-edge abstraction. Raos transitioned from graffiti art to his studio painting practice in 2011. Raos’s work has been featured at galleries including As-is Gallery and MaRS Gallery in Los Angeles, CA, F2T Gallery in Milan, Italy, Baik Art in Seoul, South Korea, Venus Over Manhattan in New York, NY, Chris Sharp Gallery in Los Angeles, CA, and the Torrance Art Museum, RDFA, and Peripheral Space all in Los Angeles. In 2022 Raos had his debut solo show at Charlie James Gallery titled *No Escaping the Housework*. In 2023 Raos had a solo booth at EXPO CHICAGO and was featured in a two-person booth at FERIA Material in CDMX, Mexico. Raos is currently exhibiting in *Tracing the Edge* at the Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College, curated by Nicolas Orozco-Valdivia and Ananya Goel, which is on view thru January of 2024. *Painter/Piloto* is Raos’s second solo show with Charlie James. Kristopher Raos lives and works in Los Angeles and is represented by Charlie James Gallery.

Artist Instagram: @kristopher_raos

Gallery website: www.cjamesgallery.com

Gallery Instagram: @charliejamesgallery