Speaking In Tongues

Jo-El Lopez

Jan 27 - March 12, 2016
Gallery Aferro Main Gallery
73 Market Street, Newark

OPENING RECEPTION
January 30th, 2016
7pm – 10pm

GALLERY HOURS
Wednesday - Saturday
12pm - 6pm
and by appointment

Jo-El Lopez
Curated by Evonne M. Davis

Born in Juncos, Puerto Rico and raised in Paterson, New Jersey, Lopez uses the visual storytelling of traditional realism to convey complex commentary on the intersection of faith and modernity, the strength of family, and the multidimensional contemporary urban experience in his very first solo show, Speaking In Tongues. The decades the artist spent under the Pentecostal doctrine, a bold color palette informed by both abstract painting as well as older traditions of icon-making, all meld to create Lopez’s kaleidoscopic worldview. The collection of artworks on view from January 27 – March 12, 2016 reveal a restless, deeply engaged spirit closely observing not only his immediate environment, but the larger historic trajectory of national news.
Lopez asserts, “Originally, I studied business and fine arts at Kean University and at Montclair State University and was prepared for a life in the corporate arena. But my life’s journey has led me back to artmaking and my true passion. My work shows my voyage from that life choice to now.” In just four years since leaving the business world to focus on art, Lopez’s work has appeared regularly in tri-state area exhibitions at The Bronx Art Center, Gallery Aferro, The Center for Contemporary Art, New Jersey City State University Gallery, Rupert Raven Contemporary, and Jersey City’s City Hall.

Speaking In Tongues assaults the senses: acid greens, bright pinks, and golden tones vibrate against each other. The artist’s instantly recognizable sense of irony, the wit that is at turns ruthless and affectionate, can be seen in works such as “The Kiss at the 16th Avenue Baptist Church,” “The Black Face Jesus,” and “The Virgin Miracle.” Yet in works like “Walking on Water,” Lopez tackles his subject with restraint and reduced composition to compliment the visceral sentiments of life’s journey. There is a willingness to reveal yearning, and a desire for emotional transparency. Racial and ethnic identity, gender and sexual politics, and parallel as well as conflicting cultural traditions and narratives all are in play when Lopez turns his attention to a new canvas.