



MEET POWER PAINTER CLEON PETERSON Cleon Peterson (Photo: Jon Furlong)

SHANA NYS DAMBROT

LAWEEKLY
MEET AN
ARTIST
MONDAY

Cleon Peterson makes striking, graphic paintings illustrating and narrating the dark power dynamics that permeate, manipulate and compromise society. With aggressively clean lines, stylization that invokes classical mythology, street art, branding, and state-sponsored propaganda, and a saturated palette of inky black, blood red, and chapel white, Peterson blends personal experience with battling demons into haunting portraits and chaotic scenes of injustice and depravity. His high-energy works are full of life and death, violence and disruption; but the compositions have the deliberative presence of icons, allegories, and

symbols — and increasingly a sense of reflective wit, dark humor as a coping strategy. How are ordinary people so monstrous? How is monstrosity so beautiful? Are we the good guys or the bad guys? Peterson's newest show is now open in New York at albertz benda.

Dambrot, Shana Nys. "Meet Power Painter Cleon Peterson." *LA Weekly*. 21 March 2022, <https://www.laweekly.com/meet-power-painter-cleon-peterson/>

albertz benda

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*Cleon Peterson: Blinded by the Light, 2022. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 72 inches
(Courtesy of albertz benda. Photo: Aaron Farley)*

L.A. WEEKLY: When did you first know you were an artist?

CLEON PETERSON: I always drew. I was always sick and stranded at home as a kid, and that's when I started dedicating a lot of time to it.

What is your short answer to people who ask what your work is about?

Power, perception, and violence.

What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?

Wow, who knows. Maybe a drug addict running around on the streets, or a bank robber, or a door-to-door bible salesman.

Did you go to art school? Why/Why not?

I did! Love art school, a great place to find other artists and see what they're thinking about and what the world is thinking about.



Cleon Peterson: In Your Hands, 2022. Acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 inches (Courtesy of albertz benda. Photo: Aaron Farley)

Why do you live and work in L.A. and not elsewhere?

The sun shines in Los Angeles, and there is space for me here.

When was your first show?

My first was in 2007 in Los Angeles at the famous New Image Art.

When is/was your current/most recent/next show or project?

I'm in New York now to open my new show Mr. Sinister at albertz benda.

What artist living or dead would you most like to show or work with?

Hmm. It'd be interesting to do a show with my brother Leigh LeDare. We grew up in the same house, having the same living experiences but different interpretations of our experiences. I think that could make an exciting show.

Do you listen to music while you work? If so, what?

I do: John Cale, Mark Lanegan, Portugal the Man, Randy Newman — an endless list.