

Aaron Fowler: Bigger Than Me

Aaron Fowler (b. 1988, St. Louis, MO) creates elaborate assemblage paintings from discarded found objects and unconventional materials sourced from his local surroundings. Through intuitive layering of castoff furniture, oil and acrylic paint, and collaged elements including CDs, water bottles, iridescent LED lights, car parts, and plastic bags, Fowler meticulously constructs hybrid tableaux infused with a sense of raw urgency. Taking compositional cues from American history painting and religious iconography, Fowler inserts both imagined and concrete narratives from his personal experience. Each work illustrates a poignant subject or event that holds significance for the artist, from portraits of incarcerated family members and friends lost in acts of violence to fantastical scenarios incorporating historical figures, role models, and public icons.

For the window of the New Museum's 231 Bowery Building, Fowler presents "Bigger Than Me," a new installation of his work. On a background of tiled mirror are two works: *Lex Brown Town* (2017) in the left window, and *Miss Logan* (2017–18) in the right. Like many of Fowler's projects, both of these pieces are reflections on specific individuals who have been sources of inspiration for the artist. *Lex Brown Town* is an homage to Fowler's fellow artist, collaborator, and MFA classmate at Yale School of Art, Lex Brown. Deploying materials including shirt-sleeves, hair weave, and a Minions backpack, Fowler portrays Brown in orange, fighting off a wolf. This piece was inspired in part by a performance she staged at Yale, *Run Bambi* (2016), in which Brown describes finding her way through obstacles including racism and sexism. This composition sits atop nine monitors screening video footage of Fowler collecting Christmas trees as material for his work.

Miss Logan is a portrait of a young girl whom Fowler believed to have been his own daughter. While DNA tests eventually proved otherwise, the artist felt a strong connection to the child, and began this painting

of her as a mermaid the day the two met. The title of Fowler's installation, "Bigger Than Me," is taken from a song by Detroit-born rapper Big Sean, in which he realizes that his life experiences and motivation to succeed are shaped by forces larger than himself. In relationship to Fowler's work, the title also speaks to the artist's process of allowing these superior powers to inform the creation of his projects—whether through the materials he comes across, incidental happenings in his life, or the relationships that shape him.

"Aaron Fowler: Bigger Than Me" is part of a series of window installations that relaunches the program originally mounted at the New Museum in the 1980s. This program included now-legendary projects by Jeff Koons, David Hammons, Linda Montano, Bruce Nauman, Gran Fury, and others.

"Aaron Fowler: Bigger Than Me" is curated by Margot Norton, Curator.

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Lex Brown Town, 2017

Christmas tree trunks, fake palm tree, pianos, videos, shirtsleeves, shirts, acrylic and enamel paint, paint tubes, dirt, tire, car parts, hair weave, Minions backpack, graduation cap, CDs, LED rope lights, and Plexiglas on wood panels and truck topper
Courtesy the artist

Miss Logan, 2017–18

Found Shell sign, Plexiglas, leather seat cushions, LED lights, hinges, screws, photocopies, enamel paint, chain, hair weave, and hair weave packaging
Courtesy the artist