

5-50

BACK IN 5

Michael Polakowski and Ivan Montoya

On view: September 9 - October 8

Opening Reception: September 9, 5-8pm



Ivan Montoya, *Nuevos Horizontos Viejos Caminos*, 2020, acrylic on cradled panel, 24 x 36 in.

5-50 Gallery is proud to present **BACK IN 5**, a two-person show featuring paintings by **Michael Polakowski** and **Ivan Montoya**, on view from September 9th through October 8th, with an opening reception on September 9th from 5-8pm. As the exhibition title suggests, the paintings in this show speak to a style of living where work and leisure can exist simultaneously. Inspired by the cultures in which they were raised, Montoya (Chihuahua, Mexico and Livonia, Michigan) and Polakowski (Dearborn, MI and Leamington, Canada) mine their personal lives and memories for the archetypes and characters that populate the included works. Each artist created 5 paintings, a reference to the title and the idea of taking a 5 minute break during work. Their artworks are grounded in a personal sense of naturalism, but imbued with elements of surrealism that suggest that lessons can be found in everyday moments if we are perceptive enough to observe them.

Michael Polakowski's practice rests on the intersection between gallery painting and large-scale murals. Throughout his upbringing in the Midwestern United States, Polakowski often felt he was missing a sense of clarity that only existed elsewhere. His work came to focus on how mental health frames and contextualizes our view of the world, often using windows or other visual portals to represent the boundary between our present lives and the seemingly far-off idealized world. Polakowski focuses on a non-linear narrative that

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depicts a protagonist grappling with finding a sense of self, maintaining presence in their environment, and connecting to the world around them. Each step the protagonist takes has an unforeseen ripple, which results in an escalating battle between humankind and nature, one where the latter is bound to prevail. Polakowski strikes a balance between “heaviness” and “lightness” in his art by employing vividly colored, inviting imagery in works that confront deep, complex narratives.

As a first-generation immigrant from Mexico, **Ivan Montoya** uses motifs from the natural world and mesoamerican folklore to visually represent his experience of existing between cultures. Bold color, dynamic lighting, and old world motifs provide him with the visual language required to turn allegorical figures into representations of immigrants and their experiences. His works explore how cultural heritage intersects with external pressures of assimilation, the resulting spark of identity that comes from this friction, and what happens when people are forced to change. In the works included in this exhibition, Montoya paints scenes of figures engaging in rest and relaxation in a distinctly Mexican-American manner. The artist places his working-class figures in natural settings, but they do not engage with their environment, and the natural landscape becomes a superficial backdrop to their daily lives. Such scenes evoke a sense of dissociation between individual and location, which serves as a metaphor for the ethereal liminal space experienced by those who are torn between two cultures.

Although Polakowski and Montoya share a studio together, they have contrasting styles and working methods. The former carefully plans out his compositions, while the latter forgoes planning in favor of working on instinct. Polakowski’s entrancing cool-toned paintings contrast beautifully with the warmth that emanates from Montoya’s palette. Pairing these works together highlights the significance of their respective formal decisions and how these decisions endow the art with the artist’s unique sensibility and vision. Despite these differences, the works by these two artists converge thematically; both confront how place shapes who we are and how we see the world, and the push and pull between work and leisure time.

Painter and muralist Michael Polakowski (Detroit, MI) completed his first residency in Fall 2019 with Red Bull House of Art. He recently completed a mural in collaboration with the Detroit Institute of Arts as a part of their Partners in Public Art Program. Polakowski’s work has been included in group shows in London, New York, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong. He recently had a solo show in Los Angeles with Thinkspace Projects in January 2023. Polakowski also has worked with commercial clients like Quicken Loans, HOUR Magazine, and Narratively Illustrated and has participated in Murals in the Market and Bright Walls Mural Festival. His works have been featured by publications like Juxtapoz and Supersonic Art.

Ivan Montoya (b. Chihuahua, Mexico) is a Detroit-based painter and muralist. He earned his Bachelor of Fine Art from the College for Creative Studies in 2017 and received the Imre J. Molnar Artistic Achievement Award, appointing him as merit-based valedictorian. He is a recipient of the 2022 Emerging Artist Fellowship supported by the Knight Foundation. Following graduation, Montoya attended the Illustration Academy in Kansas City, MO. Since then, he has worked as a painter and muralist, partnering with clients including Coca-Cola, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, Rocket Central, Mckinsey & Co, 1x Run, and City of Detroit. He has been featured by Spectrum, 3x3 Mag and The Society of Illustrators, and has work in the Guillermo Del Toro Bleak House Collection.

5-50 Gallery is an art gallery / curatorial project space set in the former site of a stone carving studio in NYC.



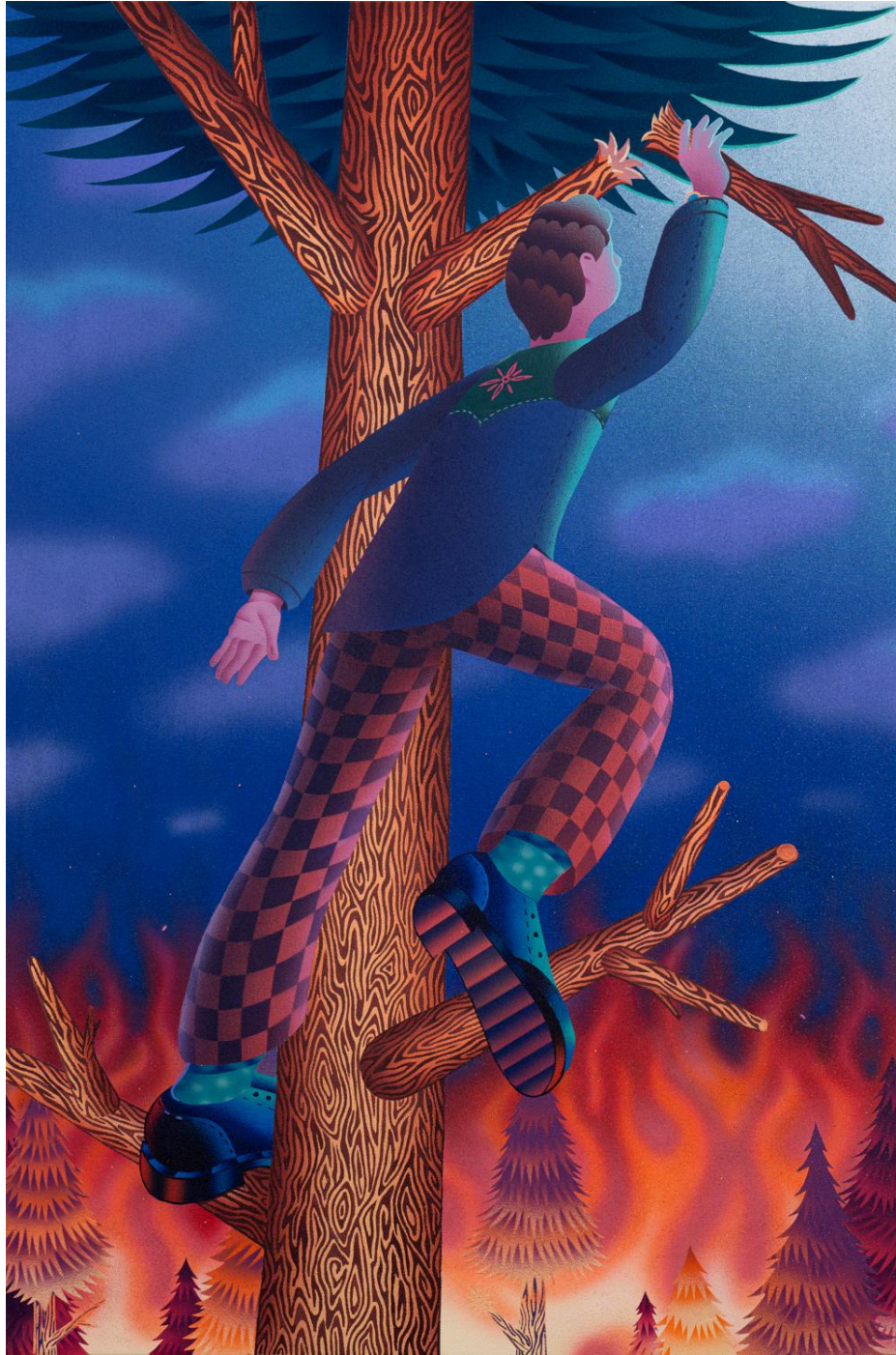
Michael Polakowski
Minor Inconvenience, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 36"

\$8000



Michael Polakowski
After the Rain, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 18"

unavailable



Michael Polakowski
No Harm No Foul, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 24"

\$4300

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Michael Polakowski
Kick Your Feet Up, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 24"

\$3600



Michael Polakowski
I'll Be Back in 5, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 24"

unavailable



Ivan Montoya

Nuevos Horizontos, Viejos Caminos, 2020

Acrylic on cradled panel, 24 x 36"

\$3000

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Ivan Montoya

Some Time Outdoors, 2023

Acrylic on cradled panel, 24 x 30"

\$2500

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Ivan Montoya

Truck Nap, 2023

Acrylic on cradled panel, 24 x 36"

\$3000

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Ivan Montoya

El Olvido / Big Winner, 2023

Acrylic on cradled panel, 30 x 24"

\$2600

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Ivan Montoya

After Hours, 2023

Acrylic on cradled panel, 30 x 40"

\$3400

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