

# MARY BOONE GALLERY

745 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10151. 212.752.2929

## NINA CHANEL ABNEY

### *Safe House*

9 November to 22 December 2017

On 9 November 2017, Mary Boone Gallery will open at its Chelsea location *Safe House*, a solo show of new work by NINA CHANEL ABNEY. The exhibition is a collaboration with Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, and is curated by Piper Marshall.

*Safe House* is so termed for being a place of refuge. It is also a phrase used more colloquially as a space where one escapes the dangers affiliated with the law. With these eight single-panel paintings, Abney invites us into a place of reprieve, showing us people partaking in everyday activities. Abney's scenarios offer sincere portrayals that counter how black life is represented in the mainstream media. The decision intentionally explores black joy as a means of resistance.

A deeply accomplished artist associated with innovating history painting, Abney took a multipart strategy to reclaim a space for creativity for this exhibition. To begin, she sourced graphics from posters dating from the 1960s that addressed aspects of safety for occupation, home, and leisure, abstracted these, and made them grounds for large-scale compositions. Then, against this backdrop Abney painted figures, objects, and letters to articulate the complex dynamics of contemporary urban life. She unequivocally is in pursuit of a depiction of commonplace activities and things. With each intuitively developed composition, each element such as the figures is often obfuscated by another element such as text, which in turn is challenged by a direction, such as an arrow. The imagery is reminiscent of sign painting, and each move made by Abney necessitates another. This chain of forms turns each element over to a type of writing, which opens a narrative and its reception to many readings. The abstracted source material (safety posters), combined with the abounding narratives from the detailed scenes, returns us to the title of the exhibition. The phrase prompts us to ask directly or obliquely: What caution and care are these narratives invoking and advocating? What danger might not be readily apparent to the viewer here?

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Abney lives and works in New York. Her solo museum exhibition, *Nina Chanel Abney: Royal Flush*, was presented earlier this year at the Nasher Museum of Art, Durham. It will travel to the Chicago Cultural Center (10 February to 6 May 2018) and then to Los Angeles, where it will be jointly presented by the Institute of Contemporary Art and the California African American Museum (23 September 2018 to 20 January 2019). The final venue for the exhibition is the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase (7 April to 4 August 2019). Abney's work is included in collections including the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn; The Rubell Family Collection, Miami; Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx; and the Burger Collection, Hong Kong.

*Safe House* is a counterpart to *Seized the Imagination*, a concurrent exhibition of the artist at Jack Shainman Gallery, which investigates anxieties and chaos engendered by the technologically-mannered media feeds.

The exhibition at Mary Boone Gallery, 541 West 24 Street, is on view through 22 December 2017. For further information, please contact Ron Warren at the Gallery, or visit our website [www.maryboonegallery.com](http://www.maryboonegallery.com).