

## Cleon Peterson is Mr. Sinister

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For years Cleon Peterson has painted conflict, both literally and in an abstract and ominous way. There is violence, savagery, murder, war, rape, and at times, a dark trone of an opposing wills. Cleon is commenting on our most feral and destructive tendencies, both on a personal and political level. It's a raw world he paints, a fantasy of darkness.

It almost seems too apt that in the week that Cleon's new show, Mr. Sinister, at albertz benda opens the same week as a savage and senseless war has begun with the invasion by Russia into Ukraine. His work has long been a metaphor for this sort of historical moment, bringing into question the reasons we seek a battle but often the pure lack of morality that war causes in humans.

"I started the show to tell a story of misunderstanding between two moral sides and how that space has many grey areas," Peterson says of the exhibition. "As I worked, I realized that a third perspective was missing: modern man or the cynical voyeur. And how that fear-based perspective bleeds into all of our human experiences, how we see ourselves, how we see others, and how we define our personal and social duties within the world."

This is something that is often overlooked in these moments; voyeurism to violence in a time of social media. We are watching wars right now, today, through the lens of social media, and at times it's difficult to imagine a reality within these tiny screens we spend our hours scrolling on. Cleon's work, too, is this sort of voyeurism. As he matures these characters, as the paintings depicts conflicts with more nuance, we begin to find our roles in watching the darkness play out in front of us. —Evan Pricco