

# JAMES HARRIS GALLERY

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## PRESS RELEASE



### John Bankston

September 2 to October 9, 2010

Opening Reception

Thursday September 2, 6 – 8pm

Gallery hours are Tues. - Sat. 11:00am -  
5:00pm & Monday by appointment

Additional images are available upon request

James Harris Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by John Bankston. In this group of work, Bankston sets his characters in an ambiguous landscape with a group of iconic objects inspired by his personal African art collection. Masks, statues and textiles are a new addition to his image vocabulary in which the artist uses to enhance the narrative with cultural symbols. Both the characters and objects in each painting represent clues from the artist's own personal history and imagination. Each painting acts as a single moment from within the extended storyline of the exhibition. The show will consist of nine paintings and three ceramic sculptures. The work explores the idea of the narrative while suggesting the subconscious and a child-like sense of the imaginary.

Bankston's loose drawn paint handling and bold primary colors imbue each work with a sensation of openness allowing the viewer to enter and participate in the narrative. The dark outlining consistent in each piece references children's coloring books and calligraphic brushstrokes. The artist constructs a fantasy world out of characters and settings that emerge from his imagination. Both the character's gesture, setting and objects within them suggest the possibilities of the direction of a fantastical narrative. At times the characters evoke the world of their actions, but other times Bankston relies on the characters actions in the paintings to prompt his plots. Bankston's work operates as a place where his unconscious can find visual expression. Movement emanates from the work as characters and objects appear and reappear throughout the exhibition asking the viewers to piece together a story for themselves. Variations in color choice, object, and gesture underscore evolution and development in Bankston's fairy-tale.

John Bankston was born in 1963 in Benton Harbor, Michigan and lives and works in San Francisco. He obtained his MFA in painting from the School of the Art Institute, Chicago in 1990. Bankston's work has recently been featured in group shows including 30 Americans at the Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL (2008-2009); A Delicate Touch at the Studio Museum Harlem, NY (2009); As It Is Written: Project 304,805 at the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco (2009-2010).