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AJAY KURIAN: YOUNG ARTISTS 2018
ART | DEC 2017 | BY JESSICA LYNNE



Ajay Kurian. Portrait by Jason Schmidt.

During a recent visit to his Brooklyn studio, Ajay Kurian unveils a large, multi-panelled, steel framed sculpture covered in purple velvet that will lie at the heart of his solo show at Sies + Hokes Gallery in Dusseldorf, Germany. During the exhibition, the object, a Jacob's Ladder, will be positioned horizontally rather than vertically, torquing throughout the gallery as if to suggest that earthly attempts to connect with the divine are all but futile. In the context of Kurian's work, religious allusions such as this surface often as his sculpture responds to the intertwined myths and realities of the American cultural fabric. The artist has long grappled with the complexities that govern race politics in which his own story has been exposed repeatedly.

With this new body of work, the artist is pointing his attention outwards in order to ask questions about the nature of white supremacy in the digital age. "The brotherhood is virtual now and to me, much more terrifying. At this point, I feel like I'm asking the question 'how are you going to save your soul?'" It is a daunting inquiry. Yet, the 2017



Installation view of Ajay Kurian's show at Sies + Hokes Gallery in Dusseldorf, Germany. Photo by Achim Kukulies.

Whitney Biennial alum brings a deftness to the making process that engenders thoughtful dialogue about a topic that remains fraught. His large scale sculptures frequently make use of materials as varied as pipe cleaners, marble, and plexiglass, and candy to investigate the precarious terrains of racial mythologies. Animals and childlike figures, such as in the artist's biennial work, *Childermass* become the embodiment of slippery social codes that might otherwise fall flat were the figures literal depictions of humans. Humor is deployed certainly, but we, the viewer, must still decide if we are in on the joke. To this end, the worlds that Kurian fabricates invite us to examine our own relationships to Americana and ultimately, the myths in which we are all implicated.