

ART

## Steve Locke

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Alexander Gray Associates; through Dec. 17.

Alexander Gray  
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Chelsea

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This New York-based artist has honed an idiosyncratic language of abstraction, mingling references to cruising and to lynching with stirring ambiguity, to illuminate queer Black experience. In his new show, paintings—of blurred faces with protruding tongues or of charged glances between men—join riddle-like assemblages, bringing undercurrents of violence to the surface. The searing, six-foot-four-inch sculpture “your blues ain’t like mine” shares its gallows structure, perversely decorative surfaces, and hardware-store materials with other sculptures on view: a lumpen form that evokes a head hangs from a bright-blue bungee cord, the object’s implied neck discolored by rusty nails. Such compositions cast shadows over sunny paintings on view, including “cruisers (cafe)” and “cruisers (real estate office),” which seem to foretell trysts and contentment. Other portraits (“the penitent,” “the hedonist”), rendered in bold colors with appealing speed, depict their subjects with intimations of struggle and strangulation. Locke reveals, in glimpses, a world riven with racism and homophobia, where pleasure is accompanied by risk.

—*Johanna Fateman*