

UPSTATE DIARY

AUGUST '26 ART REVIEWS

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REGINALD MADISON *NEW SLANT OLD STORY* at September, Kinderhook, NY through September 27, '26.



Installation view of *Reginald Madison New Slant Old Story* at September. Photo Pearl Khosrova.

For those of us who attended Catholic School, we share a certain understanding with respect to its psychological ambiance: grace riddled with angst. Reginald Madison (1941 – 2026) brings us into the curious realms of the Catholic experience in *New Slant Old Story*, his third solo show at September. Featuring paintings on canvas, panel and paper (many exhibited for the first time), the exhibition is an expressionist feast filled with religious overtones and laced with a voodoo edge. Madison was born in the South Side of Chicago and started making art as a teenager after discovering a box of discarded paints. Described as a “self-taught” artist, Madison was surrounded by jazz and other musical influences during his youth, and this had a lasting impression on his experimental artistic style.



Installation view of *Reginald Madison New Slant Old Story* at September. Photo Pearl Khosrova.

The iconography associated with Catholicism is ripe for reinterpretation, and Madison employs some of the defining symbolism of this doctrine to illuminate his personal encounters with religiosity and spirituality. In *The Crowning Of The Thorns* (2001), for example, we behold a crimson-hued portrait of Jesus with his forehead covered in black spikes. His somber face fills the frame as the rouge color around the top fades into white at the bottom, giving the impression of an unfinished work. *Crusifixion (egyptian jesus) [sic]* (2012) is a petite painting with an “outsider art” appeal that presents the Son of Man hanging on an orange-tinged cross against an ominous noir background. Several works feature a pensive nun as a primary leitmotif, and *Sister Veronic Marie* (1988) and *Choir Boys* (1992) are vibrant portrayals of this. *The Dance Lesson* (1980) is a three-part painting on salvaged wood panels that includes nuns cavorting with nude figures and devil-like creatures while angels around the edges anchor this wild scene.

A series of fish paintings bring our attention to the biblical account of Christ and his magical ability to feed a multitude with just five loaves of bread and two fish, including *Foul fish* (1990) and *Fishscape* (1990), the later featuring the acclaimed duo laying together. The titular *New Slant Old Story* (1992) is the masterpiece of this show and includes three figures—a nun, a schoolboy, and a naked fellow—against a pink background in a tableau that appears “mental” in its beautiful bizarreness. When I consider the essential memories of my Catholic school years—the looming fear of God, the rage of the nuns, the image of a tortured Christ—I feel a kinship with Madison. His brave painterly explorations into the complexities surrounding religion gives us both a new slant on the old story, and a new story on the old slant. **–Taliesin Thomas**