

# FRANCIS GALLERY

John Zabawa (b. 1989, Colorado Springs, CO) is a painter whose practice is driven by emotional intuition and philosophical inquiry. Working fluidly between abstract expressions and spare figurative compositions, he articulates the tension between the tangible and the unknowable—translating his internal world into visible forms. Even when his subjects are representational, they reveal an uncanny hidden dimension, raising questions about memory, loss, and identity.

Zabawa approaches painting as an act of rebellion. Having trained initially as a graphic designer at Columbia College, he has spent recent years unraveling his formal training, creating a visual language that emerges from feeling and vulnerability rather than technical convention. This philosophy extends to his exploration of color: working exclusively with pure pigments—ultramarine blue, cadmium yellow, cadmium red, burnt sienna, mars black, and titanium white—he mixes his own palette of muted tones and sun-bleached shades. Living in Los Angeles, he embraces warmth while continuously searching for elusive color relationships, pursuing the deepest possible reds and darker, complex tones that resist categorization.

Zabawa's work offers a new perspective in the history of landscape and still life, expanding the genre's narrative possibilities. Drawing from masters like Van Gogh, Matisse, Georgia O'Keefe, he seeks not just technical prowess but emotional resonance—the depth and rawness that make paintings endure. For Zabawa, the difficulty of painting is inseparable from its compulsion; the challenge itself drives his sustained obsession with the medium.

Zabawa has held solo and group exhibitions in Chicago, Los Angeles, Bath and London, UK. He lives and works in Los Angeles.