UTA FINE ARTS DEBUTS UNDERGROUND
FROM PORTRAITIST AND TIKTOK SENSATION DEVON RODRIGUEZ

The Immersive Pop-Up Exhibition Is UTA’s First Artist Space In The City

September 6th
Chelsea, New York
Reception: September 6, from 6-8pm

BEVERLY HILLS, CA (August 8, 2023) – UTA Fine Arts today announced that artist and digital creator Devon Rodriguez’s debut solo exhibition, titled Underground, will open this September in New York City as part of UTA’s first contemporary art Artist Space activation outside its Beverly Hills and Atlanta gallery locations.

Rodriguez, a Honduran-Puerto Rican-American painter from the South Bronx, is the world’s most followed visual artist on social media with over 31 million followers on TikTok alone and is a client of UTA in all areas. He is a leading portraitist of the era and has drawn high-profile figures from President Joe Biden to actor Jared Leto and musician Ed Sheeran, among many others. The NYC event represents the first time UTA Fine Arts is exhibiting works from an artist endemic to the creator economy, showcasing the company’s commitment to supporting and promoting unique talent across a range of creative fields.

PlayLab, the renowned creative studio, has designed a bespoke exhibition space that adopts the aesthetics of a subway platform – Rodriguez’s preferred site for creativity – above ground. His works are presented in a formal art environment, while playing an ode to their street origins and inspiration. The space is immersive, with sculptural instances of MTA subway car features abstracted into sculptures and placed in context with the paintings. Visitors will also encounter passing trains on LED screens. Members of the public who attend the exhibition will be able to participate in a lottery for a limited-edition print created by the artist.

Rodriguez’s art started at the age of eight through an early pursuit of graffiti. He eventually turned to portraiture, fascinated by its intimacy and ability to instill in the viewer a sense of empathy for the subject. His most distinguished body of work, the Subway Series, features photo-realistic drawings and paintings of passengers on the New York City subway system that garnered widespread attention and viral acclaim. His work began receiving critical and institutional recognition in 2019 when he was selected as a finalist for the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition at the National Portrait Gallery. In 2022, he sold his first painting, Girl on Subway, at the Philips De Pury Contemporary Art Day sale, and his work is now commissioned and collected by some of the most high-profile names in art, music, politics, and Hollywood.

For his first solo presentation, held at UTA Artist Space’s pop-up gallery in Chelsea, Rodriguez will reveal a new body of work, nearly two years in the making, that builds on his celebrated Subway Series. Underground will be the first time he exhibits a piece featuring himself to the public. His largest self-portrait to date, Rodriguez will be situated among several individuals in one of his most complex and ambitious works to date. The exhibition goes beyond New York and captures passengers from diverse corners of the world, encountered during his travels on the London tube and Paris and Barcelona metros. Through these portraits, Rodriguez exposes the distinct qualities, peculiarities, and shared humanity of a global collective of train travelers.

The works also demonstrate the process behind the artist’s practice, where he skillfully captures fleeting moments of sojourners on public transportation using his camera, later returning to his studio to
painstakingly transcribe these occurrences onto paper or canvas with pencil or brush. His work brings a 21st-century approach to classic portraiture, encapsulating the unassuming nuances of everyday people and places, while integrating elements of modern culture and the intricate complexities of contemporary existence.

“I came to know Devon’s work through the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery’s Portrait Competition – and I immediately realized that he was going to be a star. Years later, when I came to UTA to run the Fine Arts division and Devon was signed as a client, we knew we wanted to work together to stage the first solo exhibition of his work in a commercial gallery. While Devon is instantly recognizable as a TikTok sensation, his story about his rise as a fine artist – from his childhood in the South Bronx to his Subway paintings and achieving Masterclass-worthy expertise – is something we are incredibly excited to share with the art world and beyond,” said Arthur Lewis, Partner and Creative Director, UTA Fine Arts and UTA Artist Space. “We’re also incredibly proud to feature Devon at our first Artist Space in his hometown and one of the cultural capitals of the world.”

A solo presentation by rising young abstract expressionist painter artist Nicholas Kontaxis will also be on view as part of UTA Artist Space’s pop-up in New York from September 8, 2023. Please visit UTA Artist Space’s website for more information.

ABOUT DEVON RODRIGUEZ
Devon Rodriguez (b. 1996) is a Honduran-Puerto Rican-American artist and painter from the South Bronx. As a young adult, inspired by his love of graffiti, Rodriguez pursued his passion for art with aspirations to attend the esteemed High School of Art and Design in Manhattan. Despite facing initial disappointment when his application was rejected, he resiliently enrolled in Samuel Gompers High School in the South Bronx. It was there that he encountered a transformative art teacher, Jeremy Harper, whose encouragement spurred Rodriguez to persistently refine his skills and pursue his dreams as an artist. In 2011, Rodriguez finally secured admission to the High School of Art and Design, where he expanded his practice and first started to draw fellow passengers on the subway, as he often rode the No. 6 train connecting the Bronx and Manhattan. Rodriguez rose to attention in 2019 when he was nominated as a finalist in the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery’s triennial Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition, which celebrates excellence in the art of portraiture. He soon thereafter joined TikTok and gained immediate success for sketching strangers on the New York City subway system and capturing their reactions. Now, with over 31m followers on TikTok alone, he is the most followed visual artist on social media and a leading influencer in the fine arts space and beyond, represented by United Talent Agency (UTA). In recent years, Rodriguez has continued to draw fellow passengers on the subway alongside commissioned portraits of high-profile figures from President Joe Biden to leading actors Jared Leto and Jennifer Coolidge. Rodriguez currently teaches art courses online, including a MasterClass on portraiture.

ABOUT UTA
UTA unites ideas, opportunities and talent. The company represents some of the world’s most iconic, barrier-breaking artists, creators, and changemakers – from actors, athletes, and musicians to writers, gamers, and digital influencers. One of the most influential companies in global entertainment, UTA’s business spans talent representation, content production, as well as strategic advisory and marketing work with some of the world’s biggest brands. UTA is headquartered in Los Angeles with offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Nashville, New York, and London.

ABOUT UTA ARTIST SPACE
Since the establishment of its flagship Beverly Hills location in 2018, UTA Artist Space – the gallery extension of UTA – has been committed to showcasing art by globally recognized talent. With the opening
of a new Atlanta office and gallery in spring 2023, UTA Artist Space has expanded its impressive vision and reach across the United States. Over the past few years, the gallery’s original location has presented notable exhibitions with interdisciplinary artists and creatives, including The Estate of Ernie Barnes, Enrique Martínez Celaya, Mandy El-Sayegh, Nicholas Kontaxis, Arcmanoro Niles, Ferrari Sheppard, and more. UTA presented a series of pop-up exhibitions at Atlanta’s historic Pullman Yards before inaugurating its permanent gallery space in March 2023 with a solo exhibition by Lonnie Holley.

**UTA Artist Space, Beverly Hills** is located at 403 Foothill Road and is open from 10am-5pm Tuesday through Friday and 11am-4pm on Saturday. **UTA Artist Space, Atlanta** is located at 1401 Peachtree Street and is open from 10am-5pm Tuesday through Friday and 11am-4pm on Saturday. **UTA Artist Space, New York**’s pop-up gallery is located in Chelsea and is open from Tuesday through Saturday from 10am-6pm.

For more information, please visit:  
[UTAArtistSpace.com](http://UTAArtistSpace.com)  
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