

THE SPACES

The museum is erased in the ghostly works of Esteban Jefferson

Reframing conversations around racial identity and colonialism



Esteban Jefferson, *Label Qualiparis*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery

How do museums shape our perceptions about race, identity and colonialism? That's the question at the heart of Esteban Jefferson's series, *Petit Palais*, on show at [Tanya Leighton Gallery](#) during Frieze London.

The series was inspired by a trip [Jefferson](#) took to Paris' Petit Palais in 2019, where he noticed two anonymous busts of African men displayed in the museum's ticket hall, accompanied by the inadequate labels, *Buste d'Africain*.

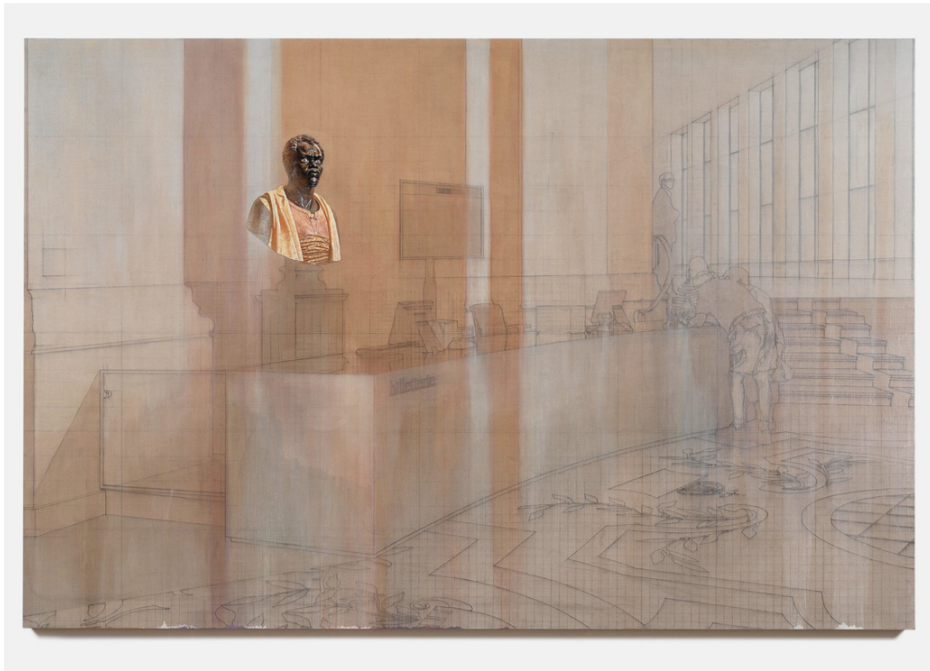
Jefferson's paintings are based on photographs taken of the museum's marble-lined Beaux-Arts foyer and are a positive 'undoing' of the institute's curatorial eradication of identity. Museum visitors become anonymous spectres in his images, rendered in loose washes and graphite outlines. The busts, meanwhile, are painted in hyperrealistic detail, emerging from the background to gaze out at the audience.

The Spaces, October 2021

Tanya Leighton

The large-scale paintings are presented alongside a two-channel video and sound installation, with field recordings from the museum and a fragment of faux-marble flooring that evokes the grandeur of Europe's museums – filled with loot from colonised lands.

Petit Palais is presented as part of "Unworlding", a new section of Frieze curated by Cédric Fauq (Booth U06).



Esteban Jefferson, *Billetterie*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery



Esteban Jefferson, *Collections*, 2021. Detail. Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery

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