

James Castle John Joseph Mitchell

June 20 - July 25, 2026



James Castle
Untitled (Pink Bird with Orange Legs), n.d.
Found paper, color of unknown origin, string
15 3/4 x 16 3/4 in
40 x 42.5 cm

Philip Martin Gallery is pleased to present "James Castle/John Joseph Mitchell," an exhibition featuring more than sixty works by two American masters of intimate scale separated by generations, geographies and backgrounds: legendary self-taught artist James Castle (1899–1977) and contemporary painter and printmaker John Joseph Mitchell (b. 1989 in Somers Point, NJ). The exhibition features works-on-paper, sculptural constructions and a handmade book by James Castle alongside paintings, monotypes and framed pastel-on-box-lid constructions by John Joseph Mitchell.

Despite working nearly a century apart, James Castle and John Joseph Mitchell share a profound interest in the narratives of their immediate environments. They build images and artworks from close observation of the world around them, finding in place - be it a rural Idaho farmstead or a quiet township along the Tuckahoe River - means by which to unlock universal truths about human perception, the world we live in whether it be defined by images or objects, and the emotional resonance of built and natural spaces.

James Castle, born profoundly deaf in rural Garden Valley, Idaho, never learned to sign, read, or write in a conventional sense. Instead, he spent his entire life communicating through an astonishing, prolific output of drawings, collages, and constructions. Working with found materials - matchboxes, scrap cardboard, mail packaging, and ice cream wrappers bound with string and rendered with a distinct mixture of woodsmoke soot and his own saliva - James Castle crafted impressions of his family's farm, home, store and the surrounding landscape. Castle was particularly interested in the images and objects that came into his world in the form of printed material and visual advertising, often copying images and text, inventing a kind of pictographic language that continues to fascinate scholars today.

John Joseph Mitchell is a formally trained contemporary painter who received his BFA from Rowan University and his MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. In his studio in a 200-year-old plus wooden house at the edge of southern New Jersey's Pine Barrens, Mitchell finds his own quiet figuration of interiority. Working primarily in small formats, Mitchell's works offer glimpses of local life: a bird flying over marsh grass, a rocking chair, a figure picking flowers in a garden. "I like looking at things," John Joseph Mitchell comments. "The painters I like all seem deeply connected to their particular world and looking at it. That's what I try to do. I look at the marshes, farms, woods, and the ocean and the houses, people, animals and things in them that surround me. I hope to express and elicit the emotional range of visual experience."

A major focal point in "James Castle/John Joseph Mitchell" is the tactile, physical nature of both artists' practices. For Castle, the choice of medium was born out of necessity and resourcefulness, turning early-to-mid-20th-century small town and rural life into complex visual poetry. The exhibition features several of Castle's rare three-dimensional constructions, including small birds and figures fashioned from stitched cardboard, alongside interior soot drawings of rich, velvety depth. Mitchell's work mirrors this physical intimacy. He painstakingly hand-makes his wooden panels, setting each piece within frames he paints himself. Mitchell's colorful drawings on the inside of pastel box lids, such as "Wildflowers in the Grass" (2022) and "The Green Dress" (2024), reveal an affinity of sorts with Castle's own use of found packaging. John Joseph Mitchell allows these objects to enter his life by chance, utilizing their surfaces only when a box is emptied, ensuring a serendipitous connection between function and artistic form. The exhibition will also include a book handmade by Castle and a group of monotypes by Mitchell organized as a bound book.

The galleries will be organized texturally and thematically rather than chronologically, allowing individual pieces to speak to one another across time. In one gallery, Castle's architectural renderings of Idaho barns and doorways hang in conversation with Mitchell's atmospheric landscapes, including "Benches in the Courtyard" (2026) and "Canoers on the River" (2026). Where Castle uses precise yet intuitive linear perspective to construct the psychological weight of an interior room, Mitchell utilizes subtle shifts in color, shape and line to capture the emotional charge of a fleeting afternoon. In these works, we find ourselves immersed in two distinct worlds rendered with astonishing specificity: Castle's historic, isolated American West and Mitchell's quiet, coastal New Jersey marshlands. In an era dominated by hyper-connectivity and fast-paced digital imagery, the respective works of James Castle and John Joseph Mitchell invite us to slow down and rediscover the art of sustained looking.

Philip Martin Gallery
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James CASTLE (1899–1977) was born in Garden Valley, Idaho and spent his life creating art using a highly idiosyncratic visual language. Uninfluenced by the mainstream art world of his time, his work was discovered later in his life and has

James Castle

John Joseph Mitchell

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John Joseph Mitchell
Landscape With Two Ospreys, 2025
Oil on wood in artist frame
6 3/4 x 9 1/2 x 1 1/2 in
17.1 x 24.1 x 3.8 cm

since been recognized globally. His art is held in the permanent collections of major institutions worldwide, including The Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, IL), The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MA), The Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), The National Gallery of Art (Washington D.C.), The Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, PA), and The Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY). He has been the subject of several solo exhibitions at galleries including David Zwirner (New York, NY), Fleisher/Ollman (Philadelphia, PA), Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.) and the seminal 2013 Venice Biennale exhibition, "The Encyclopedic Palace."

John Joseph MITCHELL (b. 1989, Somers Point, NJ) received his BFA from Rowan University (Glassboro, NJ) and his MFA from Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art (Philadelphia, PA). John Joseph Mitchell's recent and upcoming exhibitions include Philip Martin Gallery (Los Angeles, CA); Ingleby Gallery (Edinburgh, UK); Fleisher/Ollman (Philadelphia, PA); Andrew Edlin Gallery (New York, NY); Alzueta Gallery (Barcelona, Spain); Art at Kings Oaks (Newtown, PA); Gay Street Gallery (Washington, VA); Gravers Lane Gallery (Philadelphia, PA); Harper's Books (East Hampton, NY); Alzueta Gallery (Barcelona, Spain); Galleri Magnus Karlsson (Gotland, SE); Wavelength Space (Chattanooga, TN); Kamihira (Philadelphia, PA); and Little Berlin (Philadelphia, PA). John Joseph Mitchell lives and works in Tuckahoe, NJ.

The exhibition will open Saturday June 20, with a panel discussion at 3pm featuring Alex Baker, John Joseph Mitchell and Ricky Swallow. RSVP essential to info@philipmartingallery.com

A catalog, "James Castle/John Joseph Mitchell," published by Philip Martin Gallery will accompany the exhibition.

Phillip Martin Gallery thanks Alex Baker and John Ollman of Fleisher/Ollman for their work and collaboration on the exhibition and renowned artist Ricky Swallow for participating in the panel discussion.

Philip Martin Gallery is open Wednesday - Saturday from 11-5. For additional images, or information please email info@philipmartingallery.com, or call 323-507-2037. Philip Martin Gallery is located at 3342 Verdugo Road, Los Angeles, CA 90065.