

## **Christopher Rico, b. 1966, Tucson, AZ**

Christopher Rico is an American abstract painter living and working in South Carolina. He grew up on military bases across the United States and has lived on both coasts and along both borders. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Memphis in 1995, followed by an intensive series of studio art and art history courses at Presbyterian College from 2003-2005. In 2016, he received his master's of arts from Clemson University.

Rico began his career as a sculptor and set designer for the theatre, receiving two Memphis Theatre Awards. His early explorations in painting were oxidized pigment on burnished copper panels. Eventually feeling limited by the medium and because of limited access to chemicals after 9/11, Rico switched to acrylic on panel and later to oil on canvas.

Raised in a fundamentalist denomination of Christianity devoid of religious images, Rico developed a childhood fascination with surrealism and mythologies from all different cultures. In the early 1990's he saw Barnett Newman's Stations of the Cross at the National Gallery in Washington D.C., along with large-scale works by Mark Rothko and Clifford Still. Shortly thereafter he traveled to Europe, where he encountered Gothic cathedrals for the first time in Germany and Austria. In 2006, he visited Istanbul and toured Hagia Sophia, where he was profoundly moved by the art of the Byzantine as well as the contemporary Turkish abstract art in the Istanbul Modern.

In 2009, Rico began making regular trips to New York City, where he met and befriended fellow painters. Experiencing artistic communion for the first time, the trips ignited Rico's studio practice, and in 2012 he moved from colorful work to his present black and white palette.

Rico has exhibited in regional art museums in South Carolina, as well as galleries in Atlanta, GA and New Orleans, L.A. He has been in two favorably reviewed recent group shows at Lyons Wier Gallery in Chelsea in the summer of 2015, and at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery in New Orleans in the summer of 2016. Via Dolorosa is his first solo show in New York.