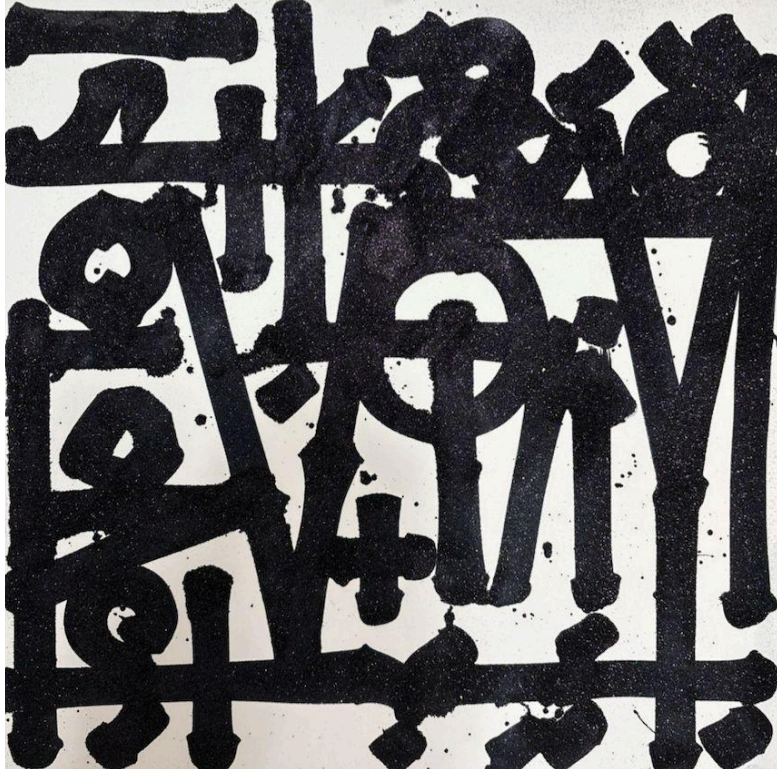


Locked Lines | RETNA | 15th October – 10th November 2025



Chess Play, 2025, Enamel with crystalline on canvas, 36 x 36 in, 91.4 x 91.4 cm

“My practice has always sought to move beyond borders of geography, culture, or even legibility. The line — whether painted on a wall in Los Angeles, inscribed across canvases, or traced in the rhythm of daily speech — becomes both barrier and bridge.”

JD Malat Gallery is honoured to present *Locked Lines*, a solo exhibition by internationally acclaimed artist RETNA (Marquis Lewis, b. 1979, Los Angeles). On view from 15 October to 10 November 2025, the exhibition unveils a new series of monumental canvases that anchor his distinctive script in stillness.

RETNA is widely celebrated for his hieroglyphic script and murals that dominate cityscapes from Los Angeles to New York, London to Hong Kong. Over the past three decades, he has transformed the visual landscape of contemporary art through a system that fuses graffiti, illuminated manuscripts, and global calligraphic traditions. With *Locked Lines*, he turns to the rhythm of inscription itself, meditating on writing as barrier and bridge.

In these works, his ciphered script is suspended in bold, gestural compositions that resist translation. Each line holds rhythm, ancestry, and gesture: fragments of history captured mid-flow and locked in place. RETNA draws on hieroglyphics, Arabic, Hebrew, and Native American sources, forging a system of marks that is fractured yet unifying, deeply personal yet collective. Born of Pipil (western indigenous El Salvadorian), Cherokee, Spaniard, and African-American heritage, RETNA channels this layered ancestry directly into his work. Often accompanied by music in the studio or on the street, his painting becomes a multi-sensory process with auditory rhythm translated into visual form, a spontaneous fusion of sound and script.

This exhibition also marks a deeply personal moment. RETNA has spoken candidly about his struggles with addiction and the redemptive role of painting. Here, his practice becomes an inscription of resilience. What once appeared on billboards and city walls now holds ground on monumental canvases; works that demand time, attention, and reflection.

"At one of the fastest-moving fairs in the world, nothing really 'freezes'. Art circulates, trades, and shifts at high speed. My response is to lock the lines in place: frozen in form, but alive in energy. They hold their ground against the constant motion of the fair."

In this way, *Locked Lines* becomes both joke and declaration: a play on Frieze, and a counterpoint to its pace. Where the fair thrives on velocity and exchange, RETNA insists on suspension and stillness, demanding that meaning be encountered on its own terms. By presenting *Locked Lines* during Frieze Week, JD Malat Gallery creates a context in which RETNA's stillness speaks with particular force at the height of London's cultural season. *Locked Lines* is both a celebration of RETNA's enduring influence and a declaration that art can resist, endure, and reveal in an age of relentless motion.

About RETNA

RETNA (Marquis Lewis, b. 1979, Los Angeles) emerged from the Los Angeles graffiti scene of the 1990s and quickly became known for his role in The Seventh Letter collective, one of the most innovative street art groups of its generation. By the age of fifteen, he was already painting over fashion advertisements across the city, developing the visual lexicon that would later become his signature.

His practice, informed by African American, Salvadorian, and Cherokee heritage, channels diverse subcultures into a highly distinctive script that merges the ancient and the contemporary. RETNA's

work spans murals, paintings, and installations, and has been exhibited internationally at institutions such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (*Art in the Streets*, 2011),



the Pasadena Museum of California Art, and in projects from Miami to Hong Kong, Copenhagen, Beirut, and Dubai.

His practice has also extended into major collaborations with Louis Vuitton, Chanel, VistaJet, and Nike, situating his language within both global cultural and commercial contexts. His murals have become landmarks across the world, from the Houston–Bowery Wall in New York to the façade of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, marking him as one of the most influential artists to bridge street culture and contemporary art in the 21st century.

For more information, images and comments, please contact: press@jdmalat.com

Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 10am – 6pm

Saturday, 12pm – 6pm

30 Davies Street, London, W1K 4NB