



Devin Troy Strother
"Flagrant Foul"

Opening Reception: May 23, 2019, 6-8 PM
Exhibition Dates: May 24 - June 28, 2019

Southern California-native and multidisciplinary artist Devin Troy Strother hasn't been able to avoid discussing race and its prominent role in American life. As a black kid growing up in a predominantly white neighborhood in the 1980's, Strother had a much different experience with his black identity than generations before him. Strother found that it was nearly impossible to be a black artist and not make work that was interpreted as being about the black experience; so he chose to celebrate black culture with comedy rather than take the more heavy-handed approach of some of the most well-known black American artists such as Kara Walker or Glen Ligon. Strother's work acknowledges the foundation of "American Culture" in that of African-American performers and entertainers— from Jazz and the blues, to contemporary dance, sports and hip-hop. He uses the stereotypes of the black entertainer to regain control of the narrative which often fetishizes black people's representation. Each artwork is planned like a veteran stand-up comedian - the work itself is the setup for the joke with the title as the punchline. The lengthy often absurd titles have become a signature part of the artist's practice, supporting his visual vernacular with an additional layer of wit.

For his exhibition at Over the Influence, Strother has looked back at the mythology surrounding the black athlete and, in particular, basketball. Americans love a rags-to-riches story, and what story has more drama than a young black kid from a bad neighborhood who surpasses the systematic and economic barriers of his community to become an icon? Players like Michael Jordan and LeBron James have a legendary place in American mythology this status has transformed them into a form of signage that represents something that transcends superficial critique i.e race and background. Through his exploration of basketball as a part of a unifying American story, Strother exposes this aspect of contemporary culture as nothing more than another minstrel-scheme. In Strother's newest body of work, he systematically works to dismantle the stereotype of "natural black athleticism" by putting in players of all races, in settings that reflect both the inner cities and the bucolic suburbs. Taking cues from Romare Bearden's groundbreaking collage 'The Block' (1971), Strother's work shows a slice of contemporary life with basketball as the common denominator. In 1977, Bearden's friend the novelist Ralph Ellison wrote that Bearden's collage created "a place composed of visual puns and artistic allusions... where the sacred and the profane, reality and dream, are ambiguously mingled". This quote could easily be applied to Strother's new narratives, where ghosts and kids from all backgrounds mingle on the basketball court at dusk, or an audience of floating heads gawk at



the gangly spectacle of black players doing a improvised dance performance that echos past lives from tribal dances that took place in mother Africa and the cakes walks of the American South.

About Devin Troy Strother

Devin Troy Strother is known for his darkly humorous alternative racial narratives in a variety of medium from cut paper to neon signage. He finds inspiration in elements as disparate as stand-up comedy, music lyrics, and contemporary politics. His striking collages take inspiration from artists such as Joseph Cornell, Marcel Duchamp and Henri Matisse. Though visually simple, Strother does not shy away from uncomfortable topics and confronts his audience with some of the most pressing issues of our time through his tragic absurdities. Born in 1986 in West Covina, CA, USA, Strother received his BFA from Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA in 2009. He completed a residency at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Skowhegan, Maine in 2010.

Strother has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in the US and abroad including at V1 Gallery, Copenhagen, Denmark (2018); Marlborough Contemporary, New York, NUY, USA (2017); Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA, USA (2013); Harlem Studio Museum, New York, NY, USA (2011); and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art; Santa Barbara, CA, USA (2010). His works are in the permanent collections of The Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Santa Barbara Museum of Art; and the Studio Museum in Harlem as well as in prominent private collections worldwide.

About Over the Influence

Launched in 2015, Over the Influence Hong Kong has served as a unique platform in Asia for an ambitious exhibition program of internationally acclaimed artists. The inaugural program of Over the Influence Los Angeles boasts a strong selection of local and international artists including Ron Arad (UK), Nobuyoshi Araki (JP), Alexandre Farto AKA Vhils (PT), Invader (FR), Kathryn MacNaughton (CA), and Cleon Peterson (CA), along with a curated series of group exhibitions.

Location

Over the Influence
1/F, 159 Hollywood Road
Central, Hong Kong

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