



Over the Influence presents

Aaron Johnson

Me and You in the Cosmic Stew

Exhibition dates: 14 October to 13 November 2021



Aaron Johnson, *We Are All Here*, 2021, Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 120 x 40cm, 78 7/10 x 47 1/4 x 15 3/4,
Courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence. Photo credit Stan Narten.

Over The Influence is pleased to present *Me and You in the Cosmic Stew*, a solo exhibition with Aaron Johnson in Hong Kong from 14 October to 13 November 2021.

This new series of paintings vibrate with ethereal figures that dissolve into hazes of disembodied color, juicy luminosity, and radiant blurs. His fluid approach to painting is rooted in the tradition of Color Field painting, working on the floor staining the raw canvas with washes of color, allowing spontaneity and unpredictability to drive the compositions. This is a show in 2 parts: in the lower gallery, large and medium paintings that depict gatherings of ethereal figures, and in the upper gallery a series of intimate scaled otherworldly portraits.

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As the artist explained, “The cosmic stew is the paint as a metaphysical potion. In the painting process, I witness these visions come to life. In this practice, I try to get into a meditative state, a less ego-bound space, to allow the paint to flow and to welcome the figures into the canvas. These are works about interconnectedness, nonduality, and a balance between cosmic chaos and cosmic harmony. I am you, and you are me, we are everyone, and everything is everything in the cosmic stew”.

As a bold colorist, Johnson’s work invites colors to clash and battle, or to strike chords and find harmony. With Big Bang-like explosions, celestial figures emerge and dissolve into a Color Field action-painting space. These new paintings allow the fluid color movements to freely occupy as much space as the figurative language, as seemingly opposing painterly agendas integrate, with a push-pull between figuration and abstraction. The larger works take us on a journey through other dimensions, terrestrial phenomena, and intergalactic love stories. In the largest canvas *Purple Earthers*, pairs of lovers seem to conjure a multitude of peculiar purple earth, amidst a cacophony of cosmic chaos. In *We Are All Here* the viewer is welcomed into a gathering of ethereal figures and vibrations of color and light. The artist imagines these dramas as occurring on the cusp of the physical world and the spirit realm, perhaps as collective consciousness gatherings opening portals to unknown realms.

Three large tondos explore terrestrial phenomena, where figures become one with atmospheric or earthly forces. “I love working on tondos for the freedom they allow. When the round canvas is on the floor, there is no designated top or bottom, as if gravity doesn’t exist and there is no difference between above and below. I can walk around the canvas making loose paint strokes and decide as I work intuitively on the orientation”, Johnson said. *Rain* is a soft and delicate composition with figures who seem to condense out of the mist. *Canyon* is sun-drenched layering of figures stratified into the terrain of a canyon, as they drift upward into the sky. *Meteors* depict the night sky ablaze with luminous color streaks descending upon a gathering of lovers embracing. Each explores an “as above so below” dynamic.

Upstairs we are greeted by small portraits of eccentric characters who are in turns ghostly, angelic, comical, psychedelic, grotesque, and enchanting. The small format displays the skill involved to maneuver the game of chance vs. control within a tight playing field. The small canvases are charged with luminescent paint stains and sometimes embellished with miniaturesque details. Tiny birds fly through, as intermediaries between the earthly and spiritual realms. Earths, planets, and orbs float in the ether, being conjured by the characters. The paintings are rich with color explosion, psychedelic gradients, and juicy blurs. These works peer into the realms of imagination and possibility, with a curiosity about what exists behind the veils of our earthly bodies and minds, what lies beyond.



Artist Bio

Aaron Johnson lives and works in Brooklyn, and holds an MFA from Hunter College, NYC, 2005. His work is in permanent collections including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Weisman Foundation, Los Angeles; and Coleccion Solo, Madrid. His work has been included in museum exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, Mass MoCA, and The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art. His work has been exhibited at galleries internationally, including Almine Rech, Brussels and Shanghai; Ross + Kramer Gallery, NY; Stux Gallery, NY; Marlborough Gallery, NY; Over The Influence, LA; AishoNanzuka, Hong Kong; Gallery Poulsen, Copenhagen; and Gallery Brandstrup, Oslo. He is the recipient of awards including The MacDowell Colony Fellowship, The Yaddo residency, and The Marie Walsh Sharpe Space Program residency. Johnson's work has been reviewed in numerous publications, including The New York Times, The Huffington Post, The Village Voice, Art News, and ArtForum, and Vice. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Location

**G/F & 1/F, 159 Hollywood Road
Central, Hong Kong**

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