



Over the Influence Presents

Michael Dotson

Communion

20 May to 30 June 2022



Michael Dotson, *Close Encounter 006Y*, 2022, Acrylic on panel, 61 by 61 cm, 24 by 24 in, Image courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence

Over the Influence Hong Kong is pleased to announce *Communion*, a new series of paintings and drawings by New York based artist Michal Dotson. This is the artist's first exhibition in Asia and his second presentation with the gallery.

In this body of work, Dotson shifts away from his signature vibrantly distorted Disney imagery, and steps into the galactic and mysterious world of aliens. The title of the exhibition, *Communion*, draws from a novel under the same name written by Whitley Strieber in 1987, which recounts the author's many encounters with extraterrestrial beings.

Communion first evolved while Dotson was quarantined due to contracting Covid-19. Confined to empty quarters, the artist found himself asking, when left alone with drawing tools and nothing else, what does one create? Each work in *Communion* begins as a fluid, gestural sketch, which Dotson then transfers to photoshop and manipulates. The result is painted in Dotson's recognizable style-crisp, precise, and electrically saturated. The collection of work is uniformly named "Close Encounter" with an assigned number and letter designation, uniting the work as a whole-a community of ghostly aliens, rather than separate entities existing on their own.

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Carl Jung once suggested that UFO sightings are a symptom of cultural anxiety, distrust, and fearful projection that is telling of the health of the population. In 1959, Jung wrote *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, one of the psychoanalyst's last works. To him, claims of interactions with otherworldly creatures is not proof of the existence of extraterrestrial life. Rather, he perceived UFO sightings as a cultural phenomenon and a symptom of something much more troubling within society. Similarly, to Jung, Dotson's *Communion* draws on one's imagination, subtly confronting a darkness that the unconscious carries—all while in a seemingly hallucinatory state.

Dotson's pristinely flat surfaces create the illusion of large, organically shaped weightless bodies of otherworldly creatures, suspended with an illusory, levitating presence. The vibrating painted frames act as a grounding force, the only object that seems to have mass. The frames curve around the amorphous bodies, as if the painting itself is their spacecraft, molded specifically for their fluid form. Their empty holes for eyes stare at the viewer, offering an invitation to enter the frame and step into their flying saucer. Subtle chromatic shifts result in the texture of the bodies seeming unclear—perhaps plastic and sticky, or squishy and slick. Smaller works on paper accompany the paintings, illustrating the same creatures but in blotchy wet ink.

Whether depicted through Disney stills, like the artist's previous work, or the levitating aliens of *Communion*, Dotson transforms pop culture motifs into psychedelic glitches that invoke a child-like imagination while confronting the darkness of the subconscious.

Artist Bio

Over the past decade of his practice, Michael Dotson has used animation stills as the point of departure to begin his paintings. He appropriates the characters with digital technology, thereby taking them out of their original context, and re-inserting them into a completely new narrative. This is his second solo exhibition with *Over the Influence*.

Exhibition dates:

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Location:

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

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