



Over the Influence Presents

Adam Beris

Grids

21 October to 13 November 2022



Adam Beris, *Window II*, 2022, Oil, acrylic, googly eyes on linen, 152.4 by 177.8 cm, 60 by 70 in, Photo courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence

Over the Influence is excited to announce Adam Beris' Asia debut at the Bangkok gallery space. Aptly titled *Grids*, the show is a presentation of his oeuvre and provides an intimate introduction into his unique aesthetic and visual vocabulary.

What began as a happy accident back in Kansas City when a friend gave him a box of old paints has become, over the last few years, Beris' signature, highly recognizable style. Organized in exacting rows across the canvas, Beris renders familiar glyphs, objects, symbols, and faces, in an entirely unexpected way. Applying pigment straight from the tube onto the canvas, he creates tangible objects, sculptural in nature, that challenge our understanding of the production and presentation of painting.

After graduating from Kansas City Art Institute with a dual degree in Painting and Creative Writing, Beris had seen enough of what he didn't want to do: flat figurative representations and familiar gestural abstractions. In the spirit of resisting his formal training and diverging from the popular styles of the time, Beris developed an approach to painting that both emphasized the materiality of his medium, oil paint, and challenged the common perspective of the picture plane. The tension between the exuberant *goopiness* of the icons, and the precision of the grids they are organized within, call attention to Beris' dominance over his material, a notoriously difficult paint to control.

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Upon seeing the grids for the first time, one feels compelled to decode or translate the meanings behind their complex lexicons. “People always want to know what they mean,” says Beris. “They don’t *mean* anything.” Rather than trying to decipher the intent behind the arrangements, Beris wants people to generate their own narratives and interpretations. In this way, the works become almost like Rorschach Tests, where each viewer sees themselves and their own tastes, assumptions, and experiences reflected back toward them.

To this point, Beris insists that he doesn’t lay them out first. He starts with a blank canvas and, one by one, fills it with objects. To see each icon as distinctive and devoid of pre-determined, relational meaning is to see them as physical objects lined up on a shelf, more precisely, Beris’ possessions lined up on Beris’ shelf. If Gustave Flaubert is correct in saying that the objects we are attracted to are not haphazard, but are material expressions of something intangible but essential to our souls, then what we’re seeing before we project ourselves upon them are pieces of Beris’ soul—pieces the artist himself doesn’t exactly understand. “Painting is more than just colors and shapes and aesthetic choices,” Beris says. “There’s a mystery to painting. It sounds cheesy, but paintings really do function as windows into someone’s soul.”

While Beris is committed to maintaining that sense of mystery for himself and his audience, he admits that a few icons point toward *pieces of his soul* that he’s more conscious of including, such as abstract allusions to contemporary and canonical artists whose works inspire and inform his process. One can find nods to Ellsworth Kelly and Hilma af Klint among others, nestled between cacti, rainbows, and tennis balls. Other references to the history and practice of artmaking include cigarettes, pieces of fruit, and miniature landscapes. Others draw attention to the act of perception itself, like bulging eyes and geometric cubes.

Whether a product of randomness or unconscious evidence of Beris being a serious artist as well as a man with the sense of humor of an irreverent teenage boy, specific arrangements lend themselves to more apparent interpretations. It’s hard to miss the pair of breasts with nipples resembling the mathematical sign beside them in *Navy Blue Sedan*. Or the two men staring at each other in *Window II*, an orange Cheeto between them. When a swirl of poop is plopped beside the artist’s initials, the placement reads as evidence of the artist’s tendency toward self-depreciation and a willingness to poke fun at his more grandiose ideas about artmaking.

In the earlier grids on view, technicolor male profiles are arranged on solid-colored backgrounds. The heads march in strict lines, gather in small groups or collectively merge into larger formations such as circles and squares. Suspended in space, the icons no longer read as linguistic but as talking heads whose language we can’t hear. The viewer is asked to construct a narrative based solely on body language, orientation, and the colors of their respective skin, hair, and facial features. The attention paid to pattern and repetition incites questions of identity, the im/possibility of communication, and the human compulsion to group, categorize, and classify one another.



To see this selection of work together is to see a snapshot of the artist's process. Beginning with vibrant color fields, he moves toward the eventual inclusion of a horizon line, with gradients, formal experimentations, and the inclusion of inanimate objects, along the way. The progression bespeaks a commitment to refinement, innovation, mastery of craft, and a refusal to stagnate. In this way, the emergence of a landscape in the most recent painting in the show seems to symbolize Beris painting his way out of the grid.

Redirecting the same resistance he aimed at the formality of his university training back onto himself, Beris is ready again to push the limits of his practice and his paint. While it's safe to assume the physicality of his materials will continue to be front and center, what's next is still mysterious, which is precisely how he wants it—with plenty of space for the work to emerge on its own terms. Beris says he's ready for messy and a little more freedom. Freedom to paint outside the lines, or in this case, the grid.—Tara Anne Dalbow

Artist Bio

Adam Beris (B. 1987) has created his own unique hieroglyphic language of distilled imagery often constructed with paint straight from the tube. Routinely aligned in a grid-like fashion, his compositions of objects and heads in profile conversely embody both a strictly scientific study and a loose informal rendering. Beheaded profiles float across a gradient orange canvas next to a cactus, some glasses, and a hashtag; how each item relates to the next is left up to interpretation. Because of this, even in abstract blobs of paint, the viewer learns to see characters and still-lives, and even his looser compositions hold symbolism in their layered paint globules.

Born in Milwaukee, WI in 1987, Adam received a dual degree in Painting and Creative Writing from Kansas City Art Institute in 2009. His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions across the United States including at Y53, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2018); Fabien Castanier Gallery Los Angeles, CA, USA (2017); The Late Show, Kansas City, MO, USA (2011). Beris was also included in the exhibition Bounding Boundaries at the MCC Longview Cultural Center in Lee's Summit, MO, USA (2013).

Exhibition Dates

21 October to 13 November 2022

Location

Over the Influence Bangkok
81 Tri Mit Road
Talat Noi, Samphanthawong
Bangkok, Thailand

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