



Over the influence Presents

Andy Dixon

Wow! More Sizes Upstairs

OTI BKK

19 May to 2 July 2023



Andy Dixon, *Large Cherub Painting*, 2023, Acrylic and pastel on canvas, 215.9 by 228.6 cm, 85 by 90 in,
Photo courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence

Over the Influence is proud to announce Andy Dixon's Southeast Asian debut with *Wow! More Sizes Upstairs* which features twenty new paintings from the esteemed artist. The exhibition is on view at Over the Influence Bangkok from 19 May to 2 July 2023.

Size matters. Or does it? An age-old question asked of everything from historical monuments and sports cars to survey samples and physical stature. A range similar in scope and scale to Andy Dixon's oeuvre that references artifacts, motifs, and tropes as esoteric and obscure as Greek mythology and as contemporary and campy as Elmo and Versace. The twenty works in Dixon's latest exhibition attempt not necessarily to answer this eternal debate but to interrogate and explore its relevance to the process and production of fine art.

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Each painting in, *Wow! More Sizes Upstairs* is titled by size, extra small, small, medium, and large, just as if they were articles of clothing. Dixon's interest in calling attention to the oft-overlooked fact that the art industry, despite its metaphysical trappings, has more in common than not with other luxury markets, such as fashion, is evidenced by his paintings and sculptures over the last ten years. His 10-foot canvas *Hermès* shirt and ceramic-initial embellished *Louis Vuitton* bag come immediately to mind, but also his patrons' homes series depicting interiors laden with fine art objects, including his own, and his vase paintings based on images from Google searches for *expensive vases*. "It's one of the most unregulated markets on the planet," says Dixon.

Offering five tropes in a range of sizes and titling them as such shortens the distance between a vicuña pantsuit and a vanitas painting. To see it this way is to see the artist's signature as a brand label, the color palette as a reflection of what's *au courant*, and the style as a means for communicating quality and status. For this exhibition, that means lush, candy-colored hues borrowed from Instagram filters and trendy café interiors, a classical, erudite approach to technique and subjects appropriated from Renaissance-era portraiture, Flemish still lifes, and Greco-Roman sculpture. The result? Paintings that incite joy, stimulate desire, signify prestige, and invite viewers to imagine the level of sophistication and superiority that could be theirs for the very low cost of...well, that depends on the size.

That most contemporary artworks are priced by size, the larger the work, the higher the price tag, belies the pervasive perception that arts valuation is based upon an inherent spiritual or magical quality. Dixon's decision to paint the same trope in four sizes, the cost increasing with each enlargement, echoes and reaffirms the principle behind Andy Warhol's decision to pair many of his figurative works with blanks of the same size. "I charge by the square inch," explains Warhol, who understood that not even leaving a canvas blank could save it from ultimately becoming a commodity. Just as with cars and houses, the bigger the ship painting, the bigger the bank account, or so the owner would like you to think.

If the five subjects, cherubs, dogs, horses, ships, and still life's, feel familiar, the reason is two-fold. All twenty paintings are paintings of other paintings that were originally painted to imitate the style and status of past paintings. In this way, they may resemble a specific work by a particular artist once seen in a museum or an art history textbook. Or perhaps, they conjure a framed print in a dentist's office, an advisement for hand soap, the back of a jacket going down the runway, or another one of the infinite examples of historical art leveraged for capital gains. Or perhaps, there's no one picture or reproduction of a picture coming to mind, but rather an amalgamation of all the portrayals of a hunting dog ever seen, whether in the National Gallery, in the dressing room of the Ralph Lauren on 5th Avenue, or hanging above Scrooge McDuck's mahogany desk. Perhaps it's the idea of a painting of a hunting dog, an idealized image, that only exists in some collective, cultural consciousness.



The pursuit of this ideal is what drove Dixon to paint four still lifes, four cupids, four horses, four hunting dogs, and hundreds of other motifs before these, including pheasants, sports cars, and goddesses. “Isn’t that why anyone paints anything? They have this ideal image in their head that they’re trying to recreate. These tropes sort of epitomize that concept, except they exist in our collective consciousness,” says the artist. When asked if he succeeded in reproducing, even once, that essential image, he laughs and gestures to the paint still wet on his hands. “I wouldn’t still be painting, would I?” While the details—the specific slope of the eye or the shape of the muzzle of any one of the dogs—ground the painting firmly in the realm of the real, when viewing the four sizes together, another image begins to emerge between them. Like a *tertium quid*, though in this case, a sixth thing, a quintessential dog whose parts, averaged out, transcend the whole, materializes behind the eyes of the viewer and stays long after they’ve turned away.

That his paintings are copies of other paintings, the originals often found in antique stores or for sale online, pose additional questions about the nature of reproduction on the level of a painting. While the thinking around reproduction, not necessarily commercial reappropriation, traditionally follows that the original is in some sense better and intrinsically more valuable, the works in this exhibition stand to counter that notion. Rendered in a relevant, modern palette and imagined in his signature High Art Style, the originals are re-contextualized and re-introduced into the contemporary art discourse and, in so doing, accumulate new meaning and value. To attend to the scale shifts is to see the original brushstrokes re-imagined and re-interpreted by the artist, not just replicated. For example, in a 15 x 20-inch portrait, a persistent cloud is a single flick of the wrist, but at 82 x 94 inches, it takes twenty or thirty individual strokes to achieve that same gesture. This act of translation demands its own level of mastery and imagination and perhaps a knowledge of alchemy—or at least a method for generating more from less.

Championing the validity of a painting of a painting further underscores the exhibition’s underlying critique of the elitism of fine art. That painterly cherubs and bowls of fruit signify wealth and status and are wielded by luxury brands as proofs of concept is, of course, the direct result of the long history of art being controlled, sequestered, and mystified by the ruling class. Just as these five tropes are tropes because the only people who could afford to commission and conserve art were the people who could afford to own horses, ships, and pedigreed dogs. As Levi-Strauss observed, to possess the likeness of a ship is to reap very similar benefits to owning the ship itself. Portraying works of art as commercial objects, subject to reproduction and arbitrary market values, is to remove them from the realm of the sacred and the untouchable and understand them in their historical context, which is to acknowledge the social systems that made their creation possible and to interrogate the ways their subjects venerate and perpetuate those hierarchies.

Plastering a Manet painting of two gentlemen picnicking with their nude escorts on a designer handbag: \$10,000. Painting a hunting dog over and over in various sizes until the absurdity of the entire art complex can be distilled to the idea of an image of a hunting dog. Priceless.



Artist Bio

Exploring themes of decadence, patronage, and the relationship between art and wealth, Andy Dixon draws inspiration from such opulent artifacts as Flemish still-lives, Versace silk shirts, and auction house objects. By layering historical references with contemporary social commentary, Dixon plays with the tropes of art history and questions the inherent value in luxuries from past and present.

Dixon was born in 1979 in Vancouver, Canada. A self-taught painter, Dixon turned to fine arts after years as a professional musician. His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in galleries and art fairs internationally including Beers, London, UK (2018); Wilding Cran, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2018); Pulse Miami, FL, USA (2017); and Volta, New York, NY, USA (2017). Dixon's work is in notable collections worldwide including the Walton Family Private collection, Crystal Bridges, AR, USA, and the West Collection, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

Exhibition Dates

19 May to 2 July 2023

Location

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

Contact

Camilla Russell
PR & Marketing Director
camilla@overtheinfluence.com