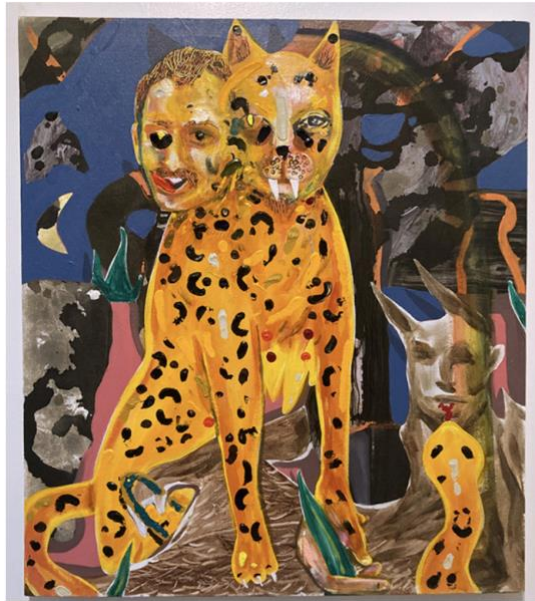




Over the Influence presents

Friends and Strangers Group Exhibition

Exhibition dates: 1 July – 12 August 2021



Daniel Morowitz *Chimera*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas. 72.6 x 66 cm. 30 x 26 in.
Courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence. Photo credit the Artist.

Over the Influence is excited to introduce four New York-based artists who explore the diaristic potential of figuration to Hong Kong: Blake Daniels, Daniel Morowitz, Billy Sullivan, and Scout Zabinski. Depicting themselves (real or imagined) their friends, or their lovers, the show is aptly titled, *Friends and Strangers*. This will be the Asia debut for all the participating artists. *Friends and Strangers* will be on view from 1 July to 12 August 2021.

The exhibition simultaneously establishes a sense of intimacy with its subjects, while investigating the shifting nature of identity and the paradox of empathy. The frankness and vulnerability with which the figures are rendered are countered by the impossibility of truly knowing the inner life of others, as well as the challenges of integrating the complex notions of one's own identity as it changes day-to-day and throughout a lifetime.

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In each painting, there exists a barrier to entry: the coded personal or cultural symbols of queer mythology in Daniel Morowitz's paintings, the pill bottles and longing in Scout Zabinski's portraits, the ominous or ghost-like apparitions in Blake Daniel's paintings, and the nonchalant gazes Billy Sullivan's captures in his subjects, at once invites the viewer, while always keeping them at arm's length.

Ranging from figurative abstraction, magical realism, to self-portraiture, the works presented in *Friends and Strangers* reveal a strong emphasis on gaze and the ways in which the subjects fit into their respective realities. The chimeric blending of figures and coexistent realities of queer space, imagined space, or physical space, embodied in the paintings in *Friends and Strangers* is impactful, honest, raw, and sincere. The figures are brazenly exposed while desperate to hide in plain sight. There is centrality within each diverse composition - as if each character is caught in a spotlight mid-act, revealing a tension between acceptance as they are and voyeurism or contempt. These works rely on the participation of the viewer as active and liable rather than a passive observer.

Blake Daniels combines landscape painting with personal narratives and collective mythologies to create an unfurling cosmology that reimagines queer bodies as mystical stewards of the environment, capable of great spirituality and expressions. He references literary traditions, magic realism, science fiction, and queer cultural practices in the paintings. The Ohio River Valley and the Highveld of South Africa feature prominently in the artworks, grounding the surrealist environments with familial roots of places that are cherished. Daniels constructs worlds that explore the shifting contours of the human body, our deep intimacy with nature, as well as the anxious devotion we have towards history.

Daniel Morowitz leans towards surrealism and abstract figurative in his paintings. The work *Chimera, 2020* perfectly exemplifies the dual nature of coexistent realities that a queer individual navigates daily: the danger of the real world and the limitless potential of imagined queer spaces. The importance of the human gaze is highlighted here, for most people try to mask their true nature, the tension of being neither here nor there, and wanting so much to belong. Morowitz's paintings shine light on the queer identity as it is socially coded to exist hidden in plain sight, and yet coexist between oppression and desire— a chimeric blending of coexistent realities and desires.



Scout Zabinski's work is a meditation on her own trauma and experiences with sexual abuse, depression, eating disorders, and anxiety. Her "psychological self-portraits" serve as both reminders of specific points of time and a kind of therapeutic relief. She paints herself naked as a reclamation of the female nude in art and in an attempt to be as vulnerable as possible on canvas.

Billy Sullivan was raised in New York City, where he attended the School of Visual Arts. Sullivan came of age in the social milieu around Andy Warhol, Max's Kansas City, and Parisian fashion designer Kenzo. Even as he absorbed such influences as Fairfield Porter's domestic realism and Joan Mitchell's dynamic pastels, Sullivan's paintings, drawings, and photographs are saturated with the intimacy of the "muses" in his own life, present and past—friends, lovers, artists, writers, allies and other collaborators, both known and obscure. Noted for their loose, gestural mark-making and unexpected color combinations, his portraits and still lifes draw viewers into the atmosphere as participants rather than mere observers.

Location

1/F, 159 Hollywood Road
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