

Kyle Thurman: *Parade*

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In the earlier months of the pandemic, like most people, I was spending a lot of time on social media. Instagram, TikTok... A fandom of people who 3D print and customize their own fantasy body armor flooded my algorithms. Marvel superheroes, most frequently Iron Man, and characters from popular video games. I became obsessed with the variants of the characters that these people would produce. At the time, I was teaching an MFA drawing seminar on Zoom. We spent two weeks discussing comic books as a potential form of artistic production. It's possible that had something to do with the arrival of these characters.

The phrase 'dream police' crossed my path in various ways in the last years. It was the name of Cheap Trick's most successful album, released in 1979 - also the title track of the album: The dream police, they live inside of my head...they're looking for me...

And, recently I spent some time reading a selection of Dennis Cooper's novels. I sought out his book of selected poetry from 1994 titled *The Dream Police*. It's a wonderful collection dealing with his ongoing themes of teenage boys, high school hallways, first love, first lust. There's a great, fictionalized, poem that follows a young drunken JFK wandering the streets of Cape Cod at night painfully wondering if anyone will remember him for more than his public image.

We are all dream police. With this work, I am less interested in the institution of the police than I am in the actions of - the verbs - to dream and to police. When placed next to each other, those two verbs essentially negate one another. Creating a neutral position with potential energy to go in either direction - catalyzing both the paintings and the sculptures.

Iron Man does not have any supernatural powers. He is a civilian with enough money to engage advanced technologies in order to produce his armored suit. Today, we see people constantly employing readily available technology in an attempt to transcend lines of power - from digitally manipulating the image and information around one's identity to 3D printing firearms. The fantasy body armor, the exoskeletons, illustrate the desire for control, power, the Crown - and for the human body to have the ability to endure repeated conflict.

I know that these paintings are just paintings. But if they are anything more, they may ask what dreams require this physical and psychic armoring?

I would like to thank Thomas Lauria, Lesser Miracle, and Walla Walla Foundry for their support with the production of the work included in this exhibition.

Kyle Thurman (b. 1986, West Chester, PA) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. In 2016 he received an MFA in painting from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College. From 2011 to 2012, Thurman studied with Christopher Williams and Peter Doig as a guest student at the Kunstakademie Dusseldorf. In 2009 he received his BA in Film Studies and Visual Arts from Columbia University. Most recently, Thurman was included in the 2019 Whitney Biennial; and his work is included in the collection of Whitney Museum of American Art.

The three unique bronze sculptures in the exhibition *Parade*, all titled *Crown (model monument, emotion)*, 2022, with supporting altars by Lesser Miracle, represent the first group of works produced after a period of research and drafting that Kyle Thurman began nearly 5 years ago. The *Crown* sculptures were catalyzed by a group of diagrams mapping emotions related to social conflict that the artist discovered online. *ANGER, ENVY/JEALOUSY, FEAR, GUILT/SHAME, MISFORTUNE*. Although these diagrams posed with authority in the field of psychoanalysis, it was later discovered that they were created and published by an amateur-enthusiast-hobbyist. A reality that pointed to the ongoing negotiations that we all face with the collapse of clear delineations between the professional and the amateur in the online sphere and beyond - the factual and the fictitious, real versus fake. Curiously, the diagrams were made by a working professional in telecommunications engineering - a field that has helped make the ambitions and failures of globalization and hyper-connectivity possible.

Crown (model monument, emotion) is cast at a scale that is based on the length of the average human torso. At this scale, these sculptures stand as autonomous works but also perform as proposals for future production at a monumental scale. These contorted, bone-like, structures appear as knots captured in a state of both loosening and tightening, or simultaneously becoming and unraveling. A transformation of psychic maps into choreographed evocations of the contemporary body in both states of conflict and resolve. Butterflies in the stomach. These seamless and tangled forms are both highly polished and uncannily organic. The sculptures begin as drawing studies of the original five diagrams. A drawing of each emotional map is then converted into a three-dimensional plane by employing computer rendering softwares. The five diagrammatic shapes are then superimposed with a texture map that creates the illusion of being cut from sheets of rough plywood. Once they receive their faux-organic skins, all five emotional diagrams are clustered into unique compositions. The resulting computer generated form is 3D printed in a high-density plastic which is suitable for being molded and cast in bronze.

At a time when monuments are being questioned and dismantled, Thurman's *Crowns* radically re-envision the nature of the monument by externalizing internal maps of trauma. Solid material honoring the biological common denominators of emotional experience as opposed to individuals or events. With his *Crowns*, Thurman offers an ambitious take on contemporary sculpture (figurative and abstract), challenging and revising the history of monumental sculpture and composition with works that open daring new territory, both in the complexity of their execution and in the originality of their psychic-conceptual imagination.

It wasn't until fairly recently in the 20th Century that the field of neuroscience began to take the study of emotion seriously beyond a lost pursuit towards unknown consequence. Now, it is hard to imagine a more topical area of study which relates to repression, the historical legacy of trauma, and current social unrest.