

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present a two-person exhibition of new work by Huma Bhabha and Michael Williams, on view in Los Angeles at 5130 W. Edgewood Pl. from January 21 through February 25, 2023. An opening reception will be held on Saturday, January 21 from 4 to 6:30 PM. The exhibition features new sculptures and works on paper by Bhabha, and new paintings and drawings by Williams.

Huma Bhabha and Michael Williams share interests in the inherent qualities of their chosen materials and the cross-pollination of abstract and figurative modes. Bhabha's sculptures, often made from cork, wood, and paint, are vivid depictions of beings whose earthiness is paradoxically the source of their strangeness. Williams's paintings and drawings are as forthright as they are beguiling, and as attuned to the nuances of contemporary life as they are responsive to ever-shifting perspectives on art history.

This exhibition, which marks the first time the artists have been paired, exemplifies their individual projects as well as their mutual concerns. Seeing their work together sheds light on each artist's trajectory, even as it shows how distinctions between painting and sculpture—and between the artists themselves—become secondary to conversations that arise between discrete objects, each of which expresses its own personality and mood. What results is an environment like a psychedelic forest where powerful objects attract, repel, and ultimately absorb all living things into their vivifying field.

Throughout the show, use of related techniques connects works animated by contrasting spirits. Williams's Puzzle Drawings, in which he engages in a self-perpetuating game of call-and-response and employs collage to disrupt narrative and graphic systems alike, are characterized by playful seriousness. They meet an unlikely partner in recent small-scale sculptures by Bhabha whose heads are fashioned from animal skulls. Collage and assemblage, respectively, give these works their physical immediacy; they also contribute to the matter-of-fact palette that serves as another way to categorize them. The Puzzle Drawings' paper, pencil, and ink, like the juxtapositions

of bone and charred cork that are found in Bhabha's sculptures, generate clear contrasts as well as opportunities for subtle gradation. In each case, the seeming absence of color contains a wide variety of shades that, in turn, evoke open spaces within otherwise diminutive artworks.

Observing and responding to shifts in scale, meanwhile, provides another way of navigating the exhibition's tableaux, as monumental gestures are seen in proximity to more focused ones. These shifts also appear within individual artworks. A life-sized reclining sculpture by Bhabha of a humanoid entity wearing the kind of helmet required for interplanetary travel, is, like many of the artist's works, both an iconic overall form and a three-dimensional composition whose varied surfaces, painterly mark-making, and subtle material transitions invite close-up looking. Meanwhile, in Williams's Puzzle Paintings—some of which are multi-panel examples that are among the most expansive of his career—fluid arrays of shapes and colors generate constant movement. At the same time, textural details provide unexpected moments of dissonance, doubt, and even stillness—reminders that, above and beyond its visual effect, abstraction is about states of being.

Other new paintings by Williams, in which he prints inkjet compositions on Dibond supports that then serve as grounds for oil-based brushwork, contain images of scenes and people subjected to the assaults and ecstasies of artmaking. They are literal, allegorical, and everything in between, and constitute pictures of what happens when personal and social narratives fall prey to irrational forces; when such narratives fall prey, in other words, to expressions of life that are inexplicable, unruly, and weird. Accordingly, the stories these paintings tell depend as much on their non-objective elements as their figurative ones. They find provocative partners in Bhabha's works on paper, where busts of hybridized creatures appear like portraits of beloved (or feared) alien relatives; collaged images of animals, cut from magazines and other sources, peer out from their hosts' eyes. Strategically embedding fragments of a photographically

rendered world into one created in pigment, Bhabha conjures another kind of hybrid: a vision of sentience that is as ferocious as it is endearing, and as wild as it is contained.

A psychological charge permeates the exhibition—with its human, animal, alien, and abstract waypoints—which increasingly feels like a physical analogue of the immaterial terrain of the imagination. The power of objects and pictures to stake their claims in the real world while alluding to the very real presence of another kind of reality is on display in every corner of this show. In this respect, Bhabha and Williams get to the nuclear core of art itself, which powers the human need to make sense of being human; that they do so while also pressing up against, dancing around, lamenting, and laughing at art's—and humanity's—capacity for meltdown is the barbed gift awaiting discovery within and among the sculptures, paintings, and drawings on view.

Huma Bhabha (b. 1962, Karachi, Pakistan) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including the Casa Wabi Foundation (2022); BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, England (2020); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2019); The Contemporary Austin, Texas (2018); We Come In Peace, Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden Commission, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2018); Roberts Institute of Art (2017); MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York (2012); Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia, Italy (2012); and Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado (2011). Notable group exhibitions include NIRIN, the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020); Yorkshire Sculpture International, Leeds and Wakefield, England (2019); Carnegie International, 57th Edition, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2018); and All the World's Futures, 56th Venice Biennale, Italy (2015). Bhabha's work is in the permanent collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., where her monumental work We Come in Peace (2018) is on view in the museum's sculpture garden. Bhabha lives and works in Poughkeepsie, New York.

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Michael Williams (b. 1978, Doylestown, Pennsylvania) has been the subject of solo and two-person exhibitions at The Power Station, Dallas (2022); LOK, the Kunstzone in the Lokremise, Kunstmuseum St.Gallen, Switzerland (2021); Le Consortium, Dijon, France (with Tobias Pils, 2017); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2017); Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal (2015); and Gallery Met, New York (2015). Recent group shows include paint, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2020); Joe Bradley, Oscar Tuazon, Michael Williams, Brant Foundation Art Study Center, Greenwich, Connecticut (2018); The Trick Brain, Aïshti Foundation, Beirut (2017); High Anxiety: New Acquisitions, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2016); Artists and Poets, Secession, Vienna (2015); and The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014). His work is in the permanent collections of institutions including the Dallas Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal. Williams lives and works in Los Angeles.