

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Le Gant de Velours, Traversing the Fantasy, and the Thousand-Yard Stare (Disparate Subjects Happening Concurrently, 1977–1979), an exhibition of new work by Matthew Brannon. The exhibition—which includes unique, large-scale silkscreen prints; photographic works that inaugurate a new direction in the artist’s practice; and other works—is on view from September 13 through October 19, 2024, in Los Angeles at 5130 W. Edgewood Pl. An opening reception will be held on Friday, September 13 from 6 to 8 PM.

While this exhibition finds Brannon revisiting mediums and modes of thought and practice that have been present throughout his twenty-five-year career, it also marks a series of important and far-reaching departures. An impassioned researcher, Brannon surveys the broader cultural landscape as if he is using a psychological x-ray, producing highly visual works—many of them informed by painting, design, and literature—that encapsulate the images, emotions, and geopolitical conundrums of various eras throughout the twentieth century. Most notably, these have included in-depth examinations of the Vietnam War and its aftermath in political and popular culture. In addition to these themes, Brannon has also fully integrated his personal experience and life story into this exhibition, so that his look at late-1970s America reverberates with the hopes and disappointments of the child Brannon was during that period as well as the adult he is today. Movingly, this includes his process of grieving, in life and in art, the recent death of his wife and life partner.

The autobiographical poignancy of the exhibition is balanced by Brannon’s characteristic humor, which is factual and surreal in equal measure. Intellectual Property (2024), a large-scale, aluminum-mounted photograph that appears—on first glance—to recreate or reimagine a scene from the 1977 movie Star Wars features subjects dressed as Princess Leia and Darth Vader. Quickly, however, the image reveals itself to be provocatively “off”; Darth Vader’s cape is made of mesh, and Leia, holding a cigarette, wears a sheer, see-through white blouse. The scene is suffused with an unlikely combination of cynical sexuality and light-hearted play in which cultural icons visibly bear the very anxieties that audiences relied on them to escape. The uncertainty that could be found in other areas of life in the late ’70s appears here in new garb, personified by characters whose mythic struggles for power now take on libidinal

meaning according to a new lexicon. The image hints at this intersection of power, sex, and language—as well as the theoretical frameworks intellectuals used and continue to use to describe them—through the inclusion of a stylized take on a book by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.

Movies and their accompanying documents, especially posters, have provided an ongoing source of interest for Brannon since the beginning of his career. In a recent print on canvas masquerading as a poster for a movie called “Scar Wars: A Sub-Space Story,” Brannon reanimates otherworldly Star Wars-related figures in order to give voice to compulsions driven by desire. With the phallic associations of the lightsaber literalized and a sultry Leia dominating the proceedings in more ways than one, the mood of the work is, as text on its surface indicates, X-rated, even if its imagery and texts are more allusive than they are explicit. The mythic structure of the film and its eventual franchise tend toward universalist views of good and evil, but Brannon indicates how the film is also a product of the era in which it was made, and therefore brimming with latent, morally ambiguous content.

The exhibition is not fully given over to the adult realm of experience, however. A youthful, even wide-eyed innocence also prevails, as does an instinct to find personal connections in the ubiquitous expressions of a culture trying to find itself as globalism begins to solidify its grip upon the masses. Text-based works on canvas provide a newly transparent window into the inner research that Brannon conducts as he collects the outer symbols, images, and documents that populate his works. Spliced among observations and tropes the artist has gleaned from his extensive investigations and translated into his own gnomonic prose—allusions to conflicts in Cambodia and Iran; the life of Jerry Garcia, lead guitarist of the psychedelic rock band the Grateful Dead; and other cultural touchstones abound—are straightforward, poetic reflections on important moments in his childhood. These range from attempts to make sense of unfathomable events to thoughtful musings on seemingly minor moments, all of which have gone on to shape the remainder of his life.

It is in the light of such works that Brannon’s newest silkscreen prints take on their full meaning. Though work like [Estimated Prophet \(I\)](#) (2024) appears at first glance to find

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its visual center of gravity in the decaying manifestations of psychedelia that continued to permeate American culture on the verge of the 1980s. It is also a paean to the heady mixture of disappointment, apocalyptic anxiety, and perverse hope that would carry through the decade to come and lay the groundwork for current paradoxical combinations of possibility and impossibility. These prints demonstrate not only the fluidity of Brannon's imagination, but the ways in which he has authored his own genre to depict the processes by which people absorb, integrate, trouble over, and rearticulate the signifiers that populate their daily lives as well as the collective currents that give rise to those signifiers in the first place. Despite the increasingly global scope of the headaches and hopes that were brewing during the years of his early childhood, Brannon offers sobering, intimate, and gripping reminders that life is still lived by beloved individuals who suffer, survive, and get by.

Matthew Brannon has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Museo Marino Marini, Florence, Italy (2013); Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany (2012); Museum M, Leuven, Belgium (2010); Whitney Museum of American Art at Altria, New York (2007); and Art Gallery of York University, Toronto (2007). His work is in the permanent collections of numerous museums, including The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Denver Art Museum; DESTE Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece; and Museo MADRE, Naples, Italy. In 2019, Gregory R. Miller & Co. published Concerning Vietnam, a book dedicated to Brannon's multi-year project investigating the Vietnam War. Brannon lives and works in New York.