

An Installation of 50 Unique Works on Paper, 2021  
Epson UltraChrome Ink on Paper  
12.25" x 15" Sheet 13" x 17" Framed

Aron Gent (Born 1985) is an artist, gallerist and professional print maker residing in Chicago, IL. He received a degree from Columbia College Chicago and has been a lecturer and educator at the Art Institute of Chicago, Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, the Hyde Park Art Center and Columbia College Chicago. Gent is a co-proprietor of Paris London Hong Kong and founder of the printing/exhibition space DOCUMENT. He serves on the board of the New Art Dealers Association (NADA), the Society for Contemporary Art (SCA) and is a founding/current board member of the ACRE Residency Program.

# ARON GENT ICE DYE TIE DIE

Exhibit: Aron Gent: Ice Dye Tie Die  
18 September - 30 October 2021

In December of 2019, the Pantone Color Institute “Color of the Year” was announced: ‘Classic Blue,’ a choice according to the marketing campaign that evoked a “calm confidence, connection, and a sense of thoughtful stability as we embark on our next decade.” The public naming contest underscores the quintessentially American drive to name, and therefore own, every possible avenue of commodification—the capital conquest of colors included. Thinly disguised as a culturally sensitive, predictive zeitgeist, the hollow ambitions for commerce that lie at the heart of the self-selected competition presents an apt metaphor for the year of 2020 in the United States. Classic Blue: The President on twitter; Classic Blue: cops murdering Black people; Classic Blue: mass graves; Classic Blue: fine people on both sides; Classic Blue: I Can’t Breathe; Classic Blue: face mask culture wars; Classic Blue: “Blue Lives Matter”; Classic Blue: shattered glass; Classic Blue: insurrection.

In Chicago-based artist Aron Gent’s (b. 1985) series of recent works on paper, each made over the last year and a half, the unstable and fluid dimensions of politics and time in a year of lockdown and unrest take shape in images that contain references to the Trump administration and the COVID-19 pandemic. Installed in a four by twelve grid along the length of the wall of David Salkin Creative, as well as a diptych, the fifty works on view feature agitprop style text, glyphs, and the iconography of clip art against swirling backdrops made of Epson UltraChrome ink. Reminiscent of the moiré patterns found in the thin-film interference of an oil spill, Gent’s approach to color and form yields to the inherent absorption of commercial-grade printer ink upon watercolor paper. At times, pigments dissipate one another in soft gradients, at others single tones are blocked against negative space like Simon Hantai’s plagues. The fluidity and coagulation of colors is also affected by the wetness of the paper before the application of ink—like tie dye (more boundless) vs. ice dye (more exact) processes used for clothing—with various of the images patterned by crystals of salt residue after being steeped in the ocean.

While the images contain signals of leisure—such as the access to saltwater from the artist’s trip to Florida, or certain aesthetics shared with the Summer of Love and children’s birthday parties—Gent’s method for creating the works is necessarily itinerant to his full-time positions as a printer and contemporary art dealer. The relationship to labor, evidenced in the choice of Gent’s materials themselves, is one that more closely resembles that of a snapshot photographer. They function like records of everyday life, captured in the interstices. In place of simply sending the picture to print, Gent’s hand dips, sprays, brushes, and blots the ink onto the paper, before often passing the same sheet of paper once dry through the machine itself to inscribe the image. Like double exposures, the works carry their message and medium in two steps.

In one of the images, a series of four repetitions of the lowercase ‘covid’ dissolves into captcha font against a desaturated RGB background that appears like the drips that form upon a car window when it rains. In a selection of other works, handless clocks occupy the center of the composition. Time and dates bleed into one another; days of the week become superfluous and collapsed. A pair of eyes stare out or wink from fields of green hues like envy. Three letter Q shapes nest into one another like Russian dolls, as if isolating within themselves. In three of the compositions, a superimposed Pantone square acts as a window; it holds no single color, but an amalgam of inks whose hues are entirely subjective. Amid the pressure to name, market, and sell all experience—even the intangible, like color—Gent’s versions remain disobedient.

—Stephanie Cristello

DAVID SALKIN CREATIVE