

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jake Cruzen

Bridget, Roosevelt, River, Toonie & JuJu

February 24 - March 26, 2022

Invisible Alien

Jake is thinking about River's infant fingers pressing into the furrows of his stubbled face on the day his son was born four years ago. It's 6am and soon a truck will arrive in Crestline to pick up five of Jake's paintings and a door. His wife's sleeping, his daughter's sleeping, his dogs, at the bottom of the pile of warm family bodies are sleeping too. River's awake, climbing over him, reaching for something. Jake is coming into consciousness now. He isn't sure what River's thinking about but it involves drawing on Roosevelt with the brown marker he's retrieving from behind Jake's pillow.

Forest fires had leveled the last dozen generations of houses that lay along the incline where Jake's stands now. Into their bones Jake had driven new plumbing, and a heating system. He had built walls, poured concrete, added windows and propped up a stilted porch against it all. Inside, he smoothed the old wood, killed the mold, nailed tin tiling to the ceiling and installed a large ceramic farmhouse sink in the kitchen. Jake remembered how he brought his cupped hands to the faucet of that sink and poured the tempered water over River, who lay on his baby back making bug noises and blinking. Roosevelt didn't remember this but he did remember River's face red and pinched on an occasion where the infant had toppled over and landed nose to nose with him. The hundred pound Old English Sheepdog had been protective over River's face ever since. It was a grin now, that greeted the slumbering Roosevelt as River bent down with the cap side of the pen in his mouth, his teeth locked around its round form, pulling at the plastic until a pop sound unsheathed the marker and the dog bolted out onto the porch.

Outside, a 90's Chrysler van is pulling up. Its driver, Alfonso, maneuvers the homemade wooden trailer hitched behind it onto Jake's driveway and, after unlatching the tailgate, begins demonstrating the suspension net system that will hold Jake's paintings during the cross country drive. Both men are half asleep, pinching the bridges between their eyes while speaking to draw out the first stirrings of alertness they need for the day. Jake doesn't talk about the bad things that could happen to his paintings, or to him or his family. He doesn't talk about the fires or the drugs that are encircling their rural town. The car accidents on the winding road that slides down his mountain into Los Angeles. The way some of the Unification Church Moonies look at his wife in the grocery store.

The way he sees it, in America the magic is very close to the top soil. The membrane separating possibility from reality is quivering in a lightning storm. Seeping in. All kinds of Evil want to crawl through a hole in your certainty and into your bloodstream.

He does talk about aliens though and so does Alfonso. In the last week a rogue Chinese weather or spy balloon was detonated, a chemical carrying train derailed causing a bloom of toxic chloride vinyl to permeate the sky and several mysterious floating octagons adorned with streamers were shot down by fighter jets. Alfonso points out that these three events were situated in the air and characterized by lies and violence—something rhymes about these things, maybe intentionally. Distractions from each other, each ensnaring our thoughts in a different way, deliberately contradictory in meaning but cohesive in feeling. Media manipulation? The grinding malfunction of an automatic pattern-seeking brain? Or a 5th dimensional Alien visitation. Jake imagines an event outside of space and without time. To our four dimensional perception, this would be invisible in every way. But it would still happen and we would feel its absence, a hole in what we know, letting a draft in. The suspicious balloon, the toxic gas explosion, the missile strike on unidentified octagons; ripple effects from the imperceivable impact of a visitation from something beyond.

The symbols of its presence falling from the sky like the shredded wrapper of a candy bar. One piece containing the Twix logo, another jagged scrap with some nutritional information, and a third turned inside out tells us nothing, but rather its mirror-like silver surface sparkles confusingly as it plunges from above. Nowhere to be seen is the Twix itself. Jake painted his wife, his son, his daughter and both his dogs. You can see them, meet their gaze, but you can't see Jake. His family can though, they are looking right at him while he paints.

Alfonso has two daughters, one studying art in Pasadena, the other at Rutgers. This job is a straight line between them. Him and Jake load the paintings into the trailer as some sun warms the mist. Bridget is nursing Neptune, the dogs are barking and River is writing his name on his hand before offering it to Alfonso for a shake. Out of reality it goes dancing, writing, then painting, Jake thinks. There is always dancing in his house. That's thanks to his wife. They met dancing in Texas, at a club named St. Johns. He can hear the music now starting up in the house while the van's tires roll over dirt onto pavement.

The lack of sleep fills the chamber behind his eyes and he closes them, seeing Bridget moving towards him nineteen years ago mouthing the words to "Pony" by Ginuwine.

Milo Conroy, 2023

Jake Cruzen (b. 1979, Los Angeles) lives and works in Crestline, CA. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include: *Jake Cruzen and Jasper Spicero*: Hillcrest, As It Stands, Los Angeles (2022); *Wishbather*, Mother Culture, Los Angeles (2020); *Do You Believe in Blue Gold*, Michael Thibault Gallery, Los Angeles (2017); *Keep It Love*, Madame X, New York (2017); *Prince Cherrie*, White Flag (with Jared Madere), St. Louis (2016); Jake Cruzen, Young Art, Los Angeles (2015); *Kanacoka*, Bed-Stuy Love Affair (with Joseph Geagan), New York (2014). Previous group exhibitions include *A Fools Game Played By Cowards*, organized by Aria Dean and Francis Irv, hosted by As It Stands, Los Angeles (2022); *Butterflies on a Cruise Ship*, Kai Matsumiya, New York (2019); *Loopstar*, Mother Culture, Los Angeles (2018); Jared Madere presents: *Bed-Stuy Love Affair*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2015); *Water from the Nile*, Lodos Gallery, Mexico City (2015); *Seau Banco Carbon*, Bed-Stuy Love Affair / Tomorrow Gallery, New York (2015).

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