

Kyle Thurman's third solo presentation at CENTRAL FINE, *Dream Police*, furthers his series of paintings and sculptures embodying the contemporary reality of contradiction. The two verbs—*to dream* and *to police*—negate the other, just as our affective realities, constantly in a polarized state, arrive at a neutral potential to go in any direction. A screen serves as the membrane between fantasy and actuality; accelerated by the internet and technology, the uncanny valley has narrowed to the point where uncertainty is not only a feeling but the landscape we now inhabit.

The titular series of paintings—*Dream Police*—depicts armored giants cast in hyper-color nightscapes. Shown in pairs meeting chest-to-chest or back-to-chest, the giants are seen from either waist-up or eyes-down, invoking a tension between the intimacy of bodies, and facelessness. Each painting shares the title *Dream Police*, followed by a possessive pronoun and a body part [*Dream Police (Your chest)*, *Dream Police (Our spine with shadow)*, *Dream Police (My shoulders)*]. Together the machine-like exoskeletons and titles call forth a human figure without depicting it.

Thurman was first drawn to this series after seeing a deluge of fandom TikToks that was fed to him by the app's algorithm; time-lapses of 3D-printed custom body armor, inspired by the *Marvel Universe* and first-person shooter video games like *Halo* and *Doom*, would jump cut to the finished product, worn by its creator now imitating their cinematic inspiration—fully armored, emerging from the fog, accompanied by heroic music. Were this armor made of metal instead of plastic, it would become tactical; however, the plastic armor serves to materialize the fantasies of this fandom, begging the greater question: what do we feel the need to psychologically arm ourselves against?

At the height of the pandemic, the physical public sphere seemed to vanish and then reappear beyond the screen, which in turn became our psychological battleground; we are at once awake and in dreams: social fantasies and fabrications sewn by open-source platforms. Recalling the values of a heat map, the prismatic palette is synthetic and unnatural, imbuing the paintings with the hypnotic qualities of the screen. One could say that the paintings are competing with the screen's totalizing effects, not only in color but in scale: each jumbo panel measuring 48 x 72 inches, mediated by the glazing of the frame. For Thurman, however, the greatest battle is not won behind the screen, but in the grounding of the body in opposition to our untethered projection. His application of a variety of pigments and binding mediums gives each painting a fluidity and surface texture that at once conjures the body within the armor, and transcends the physical to address the character armor that protects us against states of fragmentation, disintegration, and dissolution.<sup>1</sup>

Thurman's *Crown (model monument)* sculptures reckon with the contemporary modus operandi to sculpt and manipulate the image of the ego ideal. His first iteration in this body of work was a grouping of gouache studies shown in his 2018 solo presentation at CENTRAL FINE—*Like Crazy Nature*. Now cast in bronze, each crown transfigures one of five psychoanalytic diagrams related to social conflict (anger, envy/jealousy, fear, guilt/shame, and misfortune) into rigid monumental forms. Thurman encountered the initial diagrams online, posted by an inexpert hobbyist. He found them

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<sup>1</sup> Theorist Wilhelm Reich describes *character armor* in his 1980 book *Character Analysis* as the following: "In character analytic practice, we discover the armored functioning in the form of a chronic, frozen muscular-like bearing. ... It is as if the affective personality armored itself, as if the hard shell it develops were intended to deflect and weaken the blows of the outer world as well as the clamoring of the inner needs. This armoring makes the person less sensitive to unpleasure but also restricts all of his libidinal and aggressive motility and, thus, reduces his capacity for achievement and pleasure." Reich, Wilhelm, *Character Analysis* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 338.

fascinating due both to their posturing and their lack of authority. Just as the diagrams offered no terminal resolution, each crown is a three-dimensional network of pathways that appear to turn inside of themselves. Each placed upon a pedestal, these torso-sized sculptures appear as architectural knots in the process of simultaneously tightening and loosening, going up and coming down, and are essentially proposals for public monuments to affective life.

*Dream Police* embodies our lived contradiction—just as our psychic and physical realities bleed into the other, the paintings and sculptures question the permeable loop between emotional states and their consequences. Perhaps the dream in question is the hazy substrate that surrounds the armored figures, perhaps it is the figures themselves, who embody the collective dream of protecting oneself against the psychic and physical threat, or perhaps it is us, the viewer, who is drawn towards these fluorescent canvas-screens, caught between worlds of fantasy and reality.

**Kyle Thurman** was born in 1986 in West Chester, Pennsylvania; He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He graduated with a BA in Film Studies and Visual Arts from Columbia University in 2009 and earned an MFA in painting from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College in 2016. From 2011 to 2012, Thurman studied with Christopher Williams and Peter Doig as a guest student at the Kunstakademie Dusseldorf.

Most recently, Thurman was included in the 2019 Whitney Biennial, curated by Rujeko Hockley and Jane Panetta.

Thurman has held solo exhibitions both nationally and internationally, at David Lewis Gallery, New York; CENTRAL FINE, Miami Beach; Room East, New York; Off Vendome, New York; Off Vendome, Dusseldorf; Kostyal, London; and Office Baroque, Brussels; among others. Thurman has also participated in several group exhibitions at institutions including the de la Cruz Collection, Miami; MOCA: Museum of Contemporary Art in Tucson, Arizona; David Lewis Gallery, New York; Bodega, New York; Printed Matter, New York; Laurel Gitlen, New York; CENTRAL FINE, Miami Beach; Hannah Hoffman Gallery, Los Angeles; Sophie Tappeiner, Vienna; Cookie Butcher, Antwerp; Galeria Marta Cervera, Madrid; Maison Particulière, Brussels; and Fluxia, Milan, Italy; among others.

His work is now included in the permanent collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art; Institute of Contemporary Art Miami; and Allen Memorial Art Museum.