

Franz Kaka

Michael Thompson

Panther Platform

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March 13 - April 25, 2026

Preview: Thursday, March 12, 5:00 - 8:00 PM

Franz Kaka

208-1485 Dupont St, Toronto, Ontario

Gallery hours: Thursday to Saturday, 12:00 to 5:00 PM

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In *Panther Platform*, Michael Thompson connects the evolution of the photographic image—from early darkroom photography to contemporary digital imaging—to the shifting labour conditions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The exhibition takes its title from Ford's Panther platform, a body type that supported generations of vehicles through standardisation and repetition. For Thompson, the phrase functions as both reference and method, a way to think about structure, inheritance, and how images are made and circulated within a system.

Rooted in Thompson's experience working for the same Ford Motor Company that his father, grandfathers, and uncles worked at before him, the paintings often begin with found images shaped by a nostalgic yearning for the handmade and the aesthetics of manual labour. Thompson draws from a vocabulary associated with historical film photography, including grayscale passages, blown-out lighting, and the spliced structure of the filmstrip, and positions that nostalgia as an ever-present condition of the alienated worker. In his account, the worker's distance from their effort is intensified further by automation and the expanding role of artificial intelligence in the workplace.

The paintings move between analogue and digital logics. Works that echo the cropping and repetitive motifs of a historic filmstrip appear alongside paintings that take on the stretching and layering effects of digital tools such as Photoshop. Across the exhibition, Thompson isolates images within solid fields of colour, pushing them into an uncertain surround, outside any fixed time or place. That suspended space reflects the conditions the works describe: images caught between a recent past that cannot be recovered and the ongoing pressure of speed, repetition, and efficiency.

Michael Thompson (b. 1997, London, Canada; lives and works in Toronto, Canada) received an MFA from the University of Guelph (2022) and a BFA, Honours, Studio Art from Western University (2019). Solo and two-person exhibitions have been held at Pangée, Montréal (2024); Franz Kaka, Toronto (2023); and Lalani-Jennings, Guelph (2022). Selected group exhibitions have been held at Jack Barrett, New York (2025); Museum of Contemporary Art Toronto (2024); New Collectors, New York (2024); Galerie Nicolas Robert, Toronto (2023); and Jargon Projects, Chicago (2022). He is a recipient of the Tony Sherman Award, University of Guelph (2020); Visual Artists Program: Creation Grant from Toronto Arts Council (2025); and Visual Artists Creation Projects Grant from Ontario Arts Council (2023) and a Travel, Research, and Creation Fund Grant,

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University of Guelph (2022). Thompson has participated in a residency at the Slade School of Fine Art in partnership with Camden Art Centre, London (2019) and will participate in an upcoming residency at Palazzo Monti, Brescia, Italy (2026).