

# Lyles & King

**Chris Dorland**

*shellcode*

**February 24 - April 1, 2023**

**Opening Reception: February 24**

During a particular outing with his father along Montreal's Old Port, an eight year old Chris Dorland pointed out the remnants of an orbic structure, which his father promptly dismissed as "some junk from the seventies." The Biosphere in question was originally completed in 1967, and served as the United States' pavilion in that year's World's Fair. However, a fire destroyed the architectural triumph in 1976 and it sat in shambles until 1990 when the Canadian government set out to rehabilitate it. Nevertheless, Dorland's formative encounter with its ruinous state heralded his own understanding about the precarity of imagined futures. He has cultivated a practice from his recognition of the race toward progress, and its intrinsic fallacies. Further, he traces the failures of information and the material consequences of idealism.

Dorland's paintings are tasked with formalizing collapse, torquing the traditional expectations of painting by sublimating brushstrokes in exchange for streaking gestures made of scraped plastic, corrupt printing processes and glitches. These gooey and scarred polymer skins produce the appearance of shattered glass and exploded veining, disguising and betraying representational clarity. As Dorland buries layer upon layer of ossified synthetic membrane, recognizable signifiers give into a topographic landscape of fragmented data; the result of a practice that is at once accumulative and disruptive.

The exhibition's title, *shellcode*, refers to a specific instructional set that calls for the exploitation of its target machine. This form of hacking preys upon weakened internal systems, started by a command shell, which proliferates and overwhelms its host. Taking this framework as one directive, Dorland probes failing systems and tracks their landscapes. Dorland's complex datascares are rife with scintillating fragments and sections where he simultaneously embraces and collapses painting with digital artifacts. Elsewhere, bleeding inks mime machinic failures. What resounds is Dorland's ability to unify disjunctive notions. In dealing with such things as breadth and specificity, beauty and decay within the same framework, his work cultivates a screen-like unification.

The borderline between virtual and actual realities is enduringly generative, and Dorland interrogates all of its pressure points. While the paintings are squarely rooted in physical space by way of material presence and surface tension, they are conceptually bent toward digital matrices. Dorland finds source material in online chat rooms, Reddit forums, and snippets of code, implicating the digital lives of others within his image fields. All of this compressed information produces textural networks of forms and ideas. Dorland's video work shares the same language of his paintings, providing another mobile dimension to toggle between. He uses AI software to generate some of these images, then puts them through a blender of various software in order to produce the resulting distortions.

Dorland uses a mixture of manual and automated methods to develop his work, tweaking and twisting formal dials in order to harvest his complex compositions. The history of abstraction enters into the frame but without much concession made to the nostalgic sentiment inherent to the genre. Instead, Dorland propels his work into dystopian near-futures. However sublime, his imagined abstractions of tomorrow are not the kind to spark ideal social orders, but rather they embrace digital age bleakness.

—Reilly Davidson, 2023

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Chris Dorland (b. Montreal) is a Canadian/American artist living and working in New York. His work has been exhibited in *Abstract Art in The Age of New Media*, Museum of Contemporary Digital Art MoCDA; *FRONT INTERNATIONAL*: The Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art, Cleveland, US; Nicoletti Contemporary, London, UK; and Super Dakota, Brussels, BE. He has exhibited in galleries such as Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Los Angeles, US; Sikkema Jenkins, New York, US; and Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, US. His work is in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, US; Bronx Museum of Art, New York, US; and Neuberger Museum of Art, New York, US; among others. He is Director-at-Large at Magenta Plains.