

JOSHUA DILDINE: NOTATING HI POPS

Freight + Volume - New York

By Keren Moscovitch



Joshua Dildine, *False May Minds*, 2015, acrylic, spray paint, oil on canvas, 48" x 36." Courtesy of the artist and Freight + Volume, New York.

Joshua Dildine's astute solo exhibition at Freight + Volume addresses issues of memory, the archive, family dynamics and technology. An examination of the ways his work leaps off the wall and enters our consciousness may help elucidate the discourse it provokes. In short, to see a Dildine on the wall of a gallery is to look at a painting—a sensitively gestural work of art that reveals its process below the surface of its brush strokes and saturates the viewer's field of vision with color, action and surface. To see a series of Dildines on a Web site or in a gallery checklist, reduced to two-dimensional flatness and devoid of their distorting scale, reveals another aspect to their meaning, one that is directly tied to the photograph that originated the piece and its violent resolution.

Walter Benjamin warned that a work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction is robbed of its aura. Dildine's recently completed series "Notating Hi Pops" plays with this proverbial sacrificial lamb from multiple directions and on parallel timelines. Dildine prints old family photographs onto large canvases and then attacks them with aggressive, yet graceful mark-making in paint, ink and mixed media collage. Speaking directly from the sensibility of a generation that has grown up looking at "vintage" photographs as throwbacks of another era on up-to-the-minute social media sites, he comments upon a layer of historical narrative in which the image is divorced from its physical context. The photograph itself becomes a character in a contemporary drama, immersed in a process of transformation and flux.

In *False May Minds*, the photograph hiding behind an expressionistic flair of swirling paint seems to be that of a young child lounging on a father, sprawled upon a cozy suburban couch. The once-white high-top sneakers peaking out from below acid wash jeans reveal the scene as

harkening a time recent enough to feel comfortingly familiar, yet distant enough to carry the weight of nostalgia. The two bodies seem to merge into one behind the veil of gyrating forms, constructing a hybrid creature of limbs and retro fabric. The tangled mass of parent and child implies an intense intimacy, palpable and untouchable. Dildine's painting method is almost digital in its ability to suggest photographic blur, and psychedelic in its relationship to vision. Elements are copied and pasted within the domestic scene, never allowing the viewer to forget the manipulation enacted by digital technology on memories and representations.

Several paintings feature distorted and hidden faces and the assumption that below the scratches, spray paint, cutouts and other annihilating gestures lie the wide smiles of performed domesticity. *Dancing Sharp* leaves little opportunity for analysis, and seems to take its meaning from obfuscation. The composition's opacity begins with the deep astronomical abyss replacing one face and continues to the crocheted mask covering the other's, while the inversion of the entire image forces a disorientation and sense of doom. *Damn Matte* takes the sacrilegious approach of desecrating an infant's visage, his joyful laughter replaced by disruptive gashes of men's shirt fabric, seemingly displaced from another location, work of art or recollection.

We don't learn much about Dildine's upbringing from his artwork; rather, we are invited to confront our relationship to personal history and the ways that we have gotten used to superimposing the domestic space onto the public sphere, gaining and losing meaning in the process. Dildine reminds us that despite our access to information, truly intimate moments remain quarantined in psychic seclusion. ■

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