



52 WALKER ST | OCT 25 – DEC 21, 2024

Trenton Doyle Hancock, *Step and Screw: The 666 Cents*, 2024, Acrylic, graphite, paper collage, plastic bottle caps on canvas, 84 x 84 in., 213.4 x 213.4 cm.

Trenton Doyle Hancock

Torpedoboy and the Revisionist Mystery

James Cohan is pleased to present *Torpedoboy and the Revisionist Mystery*, an exhibition of new paintings by Trenton Doyle Hancock, on view at the gallery's 52 Walker Street location from October 25 through December 21, 2024. This is Hancock's eighth solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Friday, October 25 from 6-8 PM.

This exhibition is presented concurrently with the artist's museum exhibition, *Draw Them In, Paint Them Out: Trenton Doyle Hancock Confronts Philip Guston*, at The Jewish Museum in New York. On view from November 8, 2024, through March 30, 2025, the exhibition brings together the work of two trailblazing artists of different generations—whose lives, both personal and creative, share unexpected and often remarkable connections.

For almost 30 years, Trenton Doyle Hancock has intertwined a materially innovative and accumulative approach to painting with unflinching self-examination, incisive cultural commentary, and worldbuilding. Drawing from omnivorous realms of influence—from the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch and Stanley Whitney to Lee Bontecou and the RAW comic anthologies of the 1980—Hancock creates a syncretic and ever-evolving epic narrative. Within this fantastical universe, he contends with American identity, artistic legacy, and autobiography, shot through with pathos and humor.

Torpedoboy and the Revisionist Mystery features new collaged paintings that expand upon Hancock's acclaimed *Step and Screw* series. These works portray the artist's superhero alter ego Torpedoboy in a series of ambiguously-charged moments of exchange with one of the buffoonish Klansmen who populate Philip Guston's paintings. Hancock's latest chapter of this unfolding saga represents a dramatic evolution of the action at hand. Torpedoboy and the Klansmen engage in a physical struggle, with the tides of victory shifting from frame to frame. At times, the erstwhile hero even turns—violently—on his own creator. In other works, he incrementally morphs into a hooded Klansman himself.

Richly metaphysical in nature, these paintings reflect Hancock's desire to complete the unfinished narrative begun in Guston's Klan paintings. He remarks: "*While examining the late Klan paintings, I made a realization. Ultimately, the Klansmen drove their jealousy into the sunset, never facing charges or indictments. Therefore, I summoned Torpedoboy with his particular brand of vigilante justice.*" The escalating confrontations that unfold across these paintings both enact this justice and serve as an expression of the artist's own struggles with his ambivalence about participating in systems rooted in structures of white supremacy. Hancock brings the personal into conversation with contemporary political criticism, physically dragging Guston's Klansman into the present.

A number of paintings in the exhibition feature Hancock's doppelganger Torpedoboy clad in his battle armor: an American football uniform. As an adolescent in Paris, Texas, Hancock played football, a sport the artist sees as deeply enmeshed within notions of American masculinity and national identity. Hancock is interested in the ways in which, particularly as a Black man, becoming an athlete is presented as a pathway to gain agency in a capitalist system, much like becoming an artist. Co-opting the trappings of this "Great American Game" in his work allows Hancock to wrestle with his own identity as a painter and relationship to the notion of "Black Excellence."

Two monumental works in this exhibition marry all-over pattern and representational form, giving Hancock space to engage with the history of abstraction. Materially, this allows Hancock to push the limits of his densely layered surfaces, which incorporate drawing, collaged paper, bottle caps, fur, and paint. *Arsenal*, 2024, features an undulating quatrefoil pattern that has become an enduring motif for Hancock. This abstract design draws upon a childhood memory of the artist's grandmother's tile floor, upon which the earliest adventures of Torpedoboy were drafted. Outstretched limbs strain upwards to unmask the hooded Klansman, the number a pointed reference to the six current conservative Supreme Court justices.

Hancock considers these works his most personal to date—they possess a radical interiority even as they draw out the viewer's own uncomfortable complicities. He uses multifaceted representations of the self to map the terrain of both psychological and socio-political spaces, while also speaking to the condition of the Black body in America.

Trenton Doyle Hancock (b. Oklahoma City, OK, 1974) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX; MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA; Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, MO; Akron Art Museum, OH; Studio Museum in Harlem, NY; Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, Richmond, VA; NC; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, TX; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, FL; Institute for Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA; Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh; and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Hancock's work is in the permanent collections of institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Brooklyn Museum; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Dallas Museum of Art; Menil Collection, Houston; Morgan Library & Museum, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Akron Art Museum; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; and il Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea, Trento, Italy. The recipient of numerous awards, Trenton Doyle Hancock lives and works in Houston, TX.

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