

EXHIBITION LEARNING NOTES:

Harmony Korine

This resource has been produced to accompany the exhibition [‘AGGRESSIVE DRIFTER PART II’](#) at Hauser & Wirth London from 9 May – 27 July 2024.



Harmony Korine, Drift XI, 2023 © Harmony Korine. Photo: Sarah Muehlbauer

About Harmony Korine

Over the last 30 years, Harmony Korine has cultivated a multidisciplinary art practice that resists categorization and is admired internationally for the improvisation, humor, repetition, nostalgia and poetry that unite the disparate aspects of his output. His practice is built upon tireless experimentation and a trial-and-error path, producing what Korine calls ‘Mistakist Art.’ Korine’s oeuvre is both deliberate and erratic, figurative and abstract, and, like his films, blurs boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low’ in ways that simultaneously attract and repel viewers with its hypnotic, otherworldly atmosphere.

One of the most influential and innovative filmmakers of his generation, his work is guided by memory, emotion, and physical sensation as opposed to strategy and rational thought. Of his art, he has said, ‘I’m chasing something that is more of a feeling, something more inexplicable, a connection to colors and dirt and character, something looping and trancelike, more like a drug experience or a hallucination.’

Korine’s work has been exhibited at institutions worldwide, including the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent, Belgium (2000); Whitney Biennial, New York (2000); CAPC Musée d’art contemporain de Bordeaux, France (2001); Contemporary Art Gallery, Art Tower, Mito, Japan (2002); 50th Biennale di Venezia (2003); Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, Germany (2009); Swiss Institute, New York (2010); Casino Luxembourg–Forum d’art contemporain,

Luxembourg (2013); Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Gallery, Nashville (2009); the Frist Center for Visual Arts, Nashville (2016); and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2017). 'Aggro Dr1ft,' Korine's new film from which the paintings in Hauser & Wirth's exhibition are drawn, premiered at the 80th Venice International Film Festival on 1 September 2023.

What does the exhibition look like?

Visitors to the exhibition will notice the hyper-intensity of color used in the paintings on display. The strong use of red, orange and blue tones all work together to create hyper-realist scenarios that evoke different emotional responses in those that encounter them.



Harmony Korine, BLZZRD, 2023 © Harmony Korine. Photo: Keith Lubow

'BLZZRD' (2023) illustrates Korine's use of oil paint to expand on the visual aesthetic of infrared photography capturing the thermal energy of the human body. The heat of the bodies almost appears to ooze from the canvas with the strong acidic color contributing to the sensation of the viewer being inside of a video game.



Harmony Korine, REVELATOR MAXIMUS, 2023 © Harmony Korine. Photo: Keith Lubow

The artist's interest in futuristic environments and sci-fi landscapes is evident in 'REVELATOR MAXIMUS' (2003). An indistinct figure makes its way through a fantastical world created from shades of blue and cobalt. What might be happening or where the character is going is left to the viewer's imagination.

How does he make his work?

'Maybe it's because I make paintings and movies and do photography that this notion of a singularity between the forms became very interesting to me: a kind of post cinema or post picture.' —Harmony Korine, Ursula Magazine, 2023

Harmony Korine's painterly practice has a strong relationship to his experimentation in film and the moving image. His use of color is often intense, luminous and regularly described as hallucinatory in effect. The paintings on display in this exhibition, all oil on canvas, consist of renderings of images taken from his most recent film 'Aggro Dr1ft' (2023). The aesthetic effects he creates on canvas directly reference his use of thermal imaging cameras and infrared photography within the film. He often attempts to side-step traditional linear narratives in his work and creates art experiences that are more visually immersive and sensory through the incorporation of high intensity colors and visuals often seen in video gaming technologies.

What are his sources of subject matter?

Video gaming is a key source of subject matter and inspiration for the artist.

The alternative worlds that can be created and navigated in gaming stimulate creative prompts for Korine's work in film and painting. These futuristic environments are often drawn from the world of science fiction or dystopian imaginings. Images of the outcast or transgressive rule-breaker occur frequently in Korine's output. Color itself is also a source of subject matter with contrasts made between the vivid and energetic colors that appear on canvas as opposed to the dark and threatening characters they often represent.

'Also, subject-wise, it's exciting to me because the colors are so full of life and they're extremely beautiful. At the same time the subject matter and the characters are so grim and dystopian so there's this interesting discourse between the two' —Harmony Korine, Ursula Magazine, 2023

What are the major themes within the exhibition?

Dystopian and fantasy environments

Korine's paintings usually consist of fictionalized, dystopian other worlds that are populated by ambiguous characters. The sci-fi and fantastical nature of these landscapes is suggested by the use of intense psychedelic colors on canvas.

The meeting of art and technology

The intersection of moving image, photography and painting is of crucial importance to the artist. How other digital media such as video gaming and AI technologies affect and alter the role of art is a recurring theme for Korine, processes described by the artist himself as, 'post-painting' and 'post-cinema.'

Color

The strong saturated hues of blue, cobalt, red and orange seen in many of the paintings are intended to provoke a personal reaction and as the artist has stated, 'I wanted to make paintings that feel like they're basically alive. I wondered if one can make works and imagery that look like nothing has preceded them?' —Harmony Korine, Ursula Magazine, 2023

What other artists does his work relate to?

Oyvind Fahlstrom (1928 – 1976) was a Swedish multimedia artist who preferred to work in a variety of different media and techniques rather than developing a singular particular approach to art.

Martin Kippenberger (1953 – 1997) was a German artist who absorbed themes from a diverse array of sources including popular culture, art, history and politics to create his own distinctive style of work.

Other Hauser & Wirth artists to consider:

Rita Ackermann (b.1968) works between figuration and abstraction where forms seem to disappear and re-emerge. She is a long-time friend and artistic collaborator with Korine.

Paul McCarthy (b.1945) has a multi-faceted artistic practice, breaking the limitations of painting by using unorthodox materials such as bodily fluids and food. He has become known for visceral work in a variety of mediums—from performance, photography, film and video, to sculpture, drawing and painting.

Mike Kelley (1954 - 2012) Kelley drew from a wide spectrum of high and low culture becoming renowned for taking banal objects of everyday life and elevated these materials to question and dismantle Western conceptions of contemporary art and culture.

Nicolas Party (b.1980) has achieved critical admiration for his familiar yet unsettling landscapes, portraits, and still lifes that simultaneously celebrate and challenge conventions of representational painting.

Glossary

Ambiguous

Something or someone not easily understood, open to many interpretations.

Dystopian

Imagined environments or societies, usually projected as being in the future, in which people live in states of fear, oppression, or violence.

'High' and 'low' art

A concept with its origins in the 18th Century which in contemporary discussions sometimes defines the fine arts such as painting, sculpture and architecture as 'high' art while categorizing other art forms such as film and certain forms of music (rock, punk etc.) as 'low' art. The terms are generally viewed as having no relevance in 21st Century definitions of art.

Hyper-realist

A form of painting that draws on photography and film to create images with aspects of intense realism.

Multidisciplinary

The ability to work across a wide knowledge base and utilize different art forms.

Psychedelic colors

Artwork consisting of highly distorted or luminous colors.

Transgressive

Ideas or actions that usually go beyond or break accepted societal rules of behavior.

Discussion questions

- Harmony Korine often takes inspiration from and works up his initial art ideas on his mobile phone. Take a close look at the paintings in the exhibition and consider how the artist's interest in digital platforms might influence the imagery you see on canvas. In what ways do you use your mobile when thinking about or creating art?
- A key interest of the artist is breaking down the visual boundaries that exist between painting, film, and photography. In what ways does Korine utilize oil paint in the works in this exhibition to try and achieve this goal?
- Dystopian environments and sci-fi landscapes regularly appear within Korine's paintings. Can you think of other artists, either past or present, who have similar interests? How does their work compare and contrast to Harmony Korine?

Supplementary Research

<https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/40784-harmony-korine/>

[Painting as Aesthetic Drug – Ursula Magazine](#)

[In Conversation: Harmony Korine and Catherine Taft](#)

www.labiennale.org/en/cinema/2023/out-competition/aggro-dr1ft

<https://www.culturedmag.com/article/2023/09/15/filmmaker-harmony-korine>

<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/movies/story/2023-09-13/harmony-korine-aggro-dr1ft-tiff>

<https://www.vogue.com/article/harmony-korine-from-a-to-z-aggro-dr1ft-aggressive-dr1fter>