



△ Creighton Michael, *Trace 1*, 2013, paper pulp, acrylic, graphite, 28.50 x 27 x .25 inches

▷ Pinkney Herbert, *Backbeat 4*, 2013, pastel and ink on paper, 41 x 29 inches

VERGE



**CREIGHTON MICHAEL**

**PINKNEY HERBERT**

SELECTED PAINTINGS

WORKS ON PAPER



CREIGHTON MICHAEL

*Aperture 313*, 2013

paper, digital transfer, acrylic on convex panel

48 x 24 x 2.5 inches

In the course of their respective careers Pinkney Herbert and Creighton Michael have interrogated and celebrated the expressive potential of the gestural mark. Through bodies of work as diverse as they are probing, Herbert and Michael offer novel insights into the rich possibilities of gestural mark making, sharing an unwavering impulse to engage deeply with its immediacy, directness and perhaps above all its potency.

**Pinkney Herbert** creates bold, confident paintings that demonstrate his keen sense for the emotive effects of color and line. Often inspired by the sights, sounds and energies of Memphis and New York—the two cities between which he divides his time—Herbert's works are studies in duality: between cool and warm colors, light and dark and hard and soft textures. In one of his most recent paintings, *Boogie Woogie*, sleek conduit forms interweave with loose, spontaneous brushwork to create a montage of overlapping shapes and planes. Deftly combining carefully structured, digitally produced marks with broad, hand-painted gestures that appear to advance and recede, shift and pulse, Herbert takes the viewer's eye on an undulating journey across a vibrant field of prefab and spontaneous mark making.

The painting's title and colorful network of tubular forms recall Piet Mondrian's geometric tribute to the dynamism of New York City, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942-43). And as it was for Mondrian, the city for Herbert is not a thing but rather a set of feelings. Using an intuitive approach to evoke rather than illustrate the syncopated rhythms of urban life, *Boogie Woogie* reveals Herbert's intimately expressive way of organizing and processing the energies of the world around him.

A similarly sophisticated yet personalized dynamism is found in Herbert's *S. Martini*, one of a group of works inspired by a recent trip by the artist to Italy. Spirited brushstrokes of pinks, yellows and blues interlock and overlap, vying for the viewer's attention and suggesting various spatial layers. *S. Martini* hums with a tensile energy; a series of agitated black marks propose a graphic, two-dimensional reading, while elsewhere Herbert's physical handling of paint bears illusionistic impressions, as a window-like form and a wispy passage of blue suggestive of an expanse of sky invite the viewer into the canvas's impalpable depths. The work's title alludes to the 14th-century Sienese painter Simone Martini, whom Herbert admires for his precise forms and direct yet stylized religiously themed compositions. In *S. Martini*, broad strokes of color become the conveyors of the emotional states and spiritual values to produce a decidedly modern pictorial field that pulsates with its own material and auratic energy.

A similar energy is found in *Backbeat 4*, from Herbert's *Mark* series. Here, Herbert has applied thin strokes of pastels and black and walnut ink in sweeping gestures to create horizontal bands that wind their way up the surface of the canvas. Evanescent patches of shimmering color hover around the transverse structure, producing a subtle visual vibration in the viewer's eye. Herbert likens this sensory experience to that generated by rich sound harmonies, and based *Backbeat 4*'s crosspieces on the staves of a musical score. With its chromatic vitality, improvisational rhythms and sublime visual effects, *Backbeat 4* strikes a harmonious emotional chord, a characteristic experience of Herbert's ongoing engagement with the emotive possibilities of the gestural mark.



Pinkney Herbert, *Boogie Woogie*, 2013, oil, digital print on panel, 18 x 24 inches, pastel on paper

For **Creighton Michael**, the draughtsman's mark is of distinct and central importance to his artistic practice. Using his own history of mark making as both the subject of and the physical material for new artistic production, Michael has produced a uniquely tautological body of work that explores and elaborates on the transformative possibilities of the graphic mark.

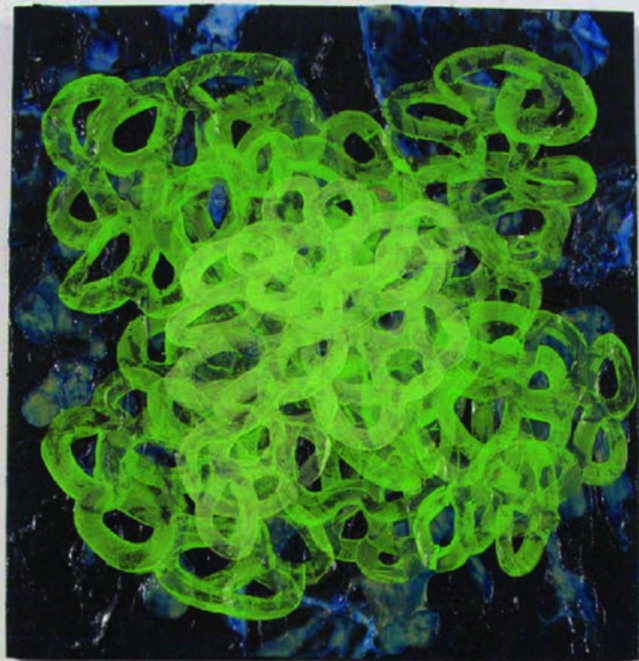
In his painting *Backchannel 711*, Michael uses a formal vocabulary derived from his earlier drawing episodes. The work's initial improvisational appearance—a pictorial space filled with seemingly spontaneous calligraphic marks—belies a meticulous artistic process. To make *Backchannel 711*, Michael fed details and elements from previous drawing activity into a computer and then used basic graphics editing software to manipulate the digital files. Wielding the software's erasure tool like an artist's brush, Michael composes intricate patterns upon, or perhaps more accurately within the ground of this digitized imagery. *Backchannel 711* thus becomes both a record of the artist's current process and an abstracted archive of previous mark making.

This palimpsestic approach to his own oeuvre is further evident in *Backchannel 711*'s upper register, where a colorful cluster of serpentine lines allude to a pattern of marking activity found in his Trace series, two of which, *Trace 1413* and *Trace 913*, are on view nearby. Michael's Trace works consist of paper that has been soaked in a graphite bath, giving it a decidedly sculptural sensibility. In so doing, Michael transposes the most basic elements of drawing—graphite and paper—in what he refers to as “dimensional drawings.” In *Backchannel 711*, Michael transfers these sculptural episodes from the Trace series back onto the planar surface of the canvas. Through this aggregative process, *Backchannel 711* simultaneously reflects inwardly on its own complex structure and form and outwardly onto a broader history of drawing activity to which it is indebted.

Michael's recent Aperture series further elaborates on the artist's richly innovative approach to mark making. In *Aperture study 113* and *Aperture study 213*, Michael uses transfer images derived from patterns digitally redrawn from earlier series to produce new patterns of marking. The series takes its title from the narrow arrow slits found in medieval fortifications, architectural apertures whose form is echoed in the strong vertical bands that organize the pictorial space in *Aperture study 113* and *Aperture study 213*. Befitting Michael's transcriptive approach to art, the series' title is not restricted to just one reference; the term “aperture” also alludes to photography—a modern means of image making that Michael has progressively integrated into his creative process.

The layered surfaces of *Aperture study 113* and *Aperture study 213* thus become compendiums of Michael's history of drawing. By using his own oeuvre as building blocks for new work, Michael invites viewers to both appreciate the productive power and immediacy of the singular mark and to bear witness to an evolving formal vocabulary of accumulative marking patterns pursued over time and across a breathtaking range of artistic media and techniques.

Herbert and Michael offer varied and dynamic meditations on the relationship between innovative and historical forms of mark making. Employing hand-wrought, mechanical and digital means of production, the artists also reveal the remarkable richness and resiliency of the gestural mark.



Creighton Michael, *Backchannel 711*, 2011, paper, acrylic, digital transfer, 40 x 20 inches; *Aperture 413*, 2013, paper, digital transfer, acrylic on convex panel, 48 x 24 x 2.5 inches



PINKNEY HERBERT

*S. Martin*, 2012  
oil on canvas  
48 x 36 inches

essay by

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