

## Press Release

### Cheyney Thompson: *Several Bellonas / Intervals and Displacements*

November 10 – December 17, 2022

Lisson Gallery, 504 West 24th Street, New York  
Andrew Kreps Gallery, 22 Cortlandt Alley, New York

Cheyney Thompson's inaugural exhibition with Lisson Gallery is an expansive, dual-part presentation staged across two venues, in collaboration with Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York. Presenting four distinct, ongoing bodies of painting and drawing, both exhibitions evince Thompson's thoughtful practice, featuring the connective strands of control, combination, and constraint.

At Lisson Gallery, Thompson shows a series of new paintings, collectively titled *Several Bellonas*. Each is a life-sized detail from a larger Peter Paul Rubens panel in the Louvre, *Apotheosis of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency of Marie de Medici* (1625). Rather than simple, studious copies of an Old Master, however, these multiple reinterpretations are akin to radiographic scans, in which Thompson goes beyond the surface of the original, breaking it down into its constituent parts, before building it back up again. Mimicking the process of image production associated with printing presses, Thompson paints in successive layers of black, cyan, magenta, and yellow. In reducing painting to an act of transcription of decomposed elements, there is room for deviations and differences to emerge and multiply from the original and across the series as a whole. Here, minor variations in densities of color cascade to produce differences across the surfaces of each painting. Unlike the shifting light in Monet's haystacks, which charted time, in Thompson's series, this shift comes from slips of attention and an approach that indexes and amplifies errors in navigating an increasingly confused technical image. This technique attends to both the impossibility of refuting technology through handwork and of stripping back the Rubens painting to a mere set of instructions, or lines of code.

Paul Cézanne drew Rubens' Bellona ten times over the last twenty years of his life, creating a series of drawings that would become a point of reference for Thompson starting in 2005, while working with artists Sam Lewitt and Gareth James on a fictional journal concerning drawing, titled *Scorched Earth*. For Thompson, Cézanne's drawings of this allegorical figure of war held together reflections on the role of museums, the motif, and shifts in technologies of image-making. In 2018, Thompson began his series *Toolpaths for Bellona*, in which Cézanne's drawings were redrawn line by line, translated into start points, continuous lines, angles and end points. These were then fed into a CNC machine to faithfully reproduce mechanical versions of varying scales and materials, successfully recreating the pressure of Cézanne's pencil. Having established a data set for each of Cézanne's drawings, Thompson produced forty-five new unique works, derived from the forty-five possible pairs of drawings within the set of ten. While containing elements from each of the "parent" drawings, their offspring would resemble neither, using techniques from data science and machine learning to ultimately generate new compositions.

Thompson then subjected these forty-five new drawings to the same process, leading to an exponential growth, and an exploded population of 990 unique derivations. While typically, similar techniques of data synthesis are geared towards a supposed optimization of the information at hand, Thompson looks towards systems that produce results, rather than conclusions. This focus on sequence over culmination calls to mind the processes by which newness, originality, and our contemporary fascination with gilt-edge novelty are generated by the technological. The culmination of a project started in 2018, these 990 drawings arrive now, alongside an exponential burst of expansion and public access to new forms of artificial intelligence. They are presented here frame-mounted and color-coded to visually identify each drawing and its place within the combinatorial sequence from which it was produced.

At Andrew Kreps Gallery, Thompson continues his *Displacement* series of paintings, each of which also begins life as a homage

to the standardized grid. After laying down this regimented ground, a series of custom-made silicon tools are employed to disrupt the still-wet, gridded surface and impose the abstracting, chaotic force of the artist's interventions. Making drags and smears across the surfaces of these works, as though swiping a hand across a screen or tablet, Thompson rearranges the five-millimeter, pixelsque black squares into glitched, attenuated forms, stretching and bending the grid back through and beyond itself into three and perhaps four dimensions, if you allow for the passage of time through these spaces.

The transparent, x-ray quality of Thompson's *Bellona* series is again evident in these *Displacement* works, which are richly layered with spray-colored bands that mark a regular half-meter interval with irregular gradients. The lozenge supports bisect and measure the feature wall of the gallery, setting the basis for a repeating unit that fills and nearly exceeds the architectural container. Multiple measuring systems slip in and out of phase with one another, allowing the canvases to function as 'displaced' elements from a larger, nested set of determining structures.

The final of the four series, also exhibited at Andrew Kreps, are 13 new drawings in Thompson's *TouchTime* series that feature elements of Houdon's *Ecorché*, a skinless figure used in the teaching of anatomy. These drawing are executed using a custom built touch-sensitive surface, where a microcomputer records exactly 10 seconds of contact time between implement and paper. By restricting his involvement to minutely recorded, and constrained bursts of transient mark-making – either long, slow lines, or rapid-fire, staccato stabs – Thompson can quantify his artistic labor and rationalize the production of knowledge. *TouchTime* relates to both this interactive limit to the drawings production and to the durational concept of Takt time that is used to organize work hours to meet demand in manufacturing. Far from the mechanical universal clock time that helped discipline the wage relation, the infinitesimally small unit of the compute cycle utilized in the *TouchTime* drawings allows for far more flexible, pervasive forms of capture.

In the Spring of 2023, Lisson Gallery and Andrew Kreps Gallery will co-publish a catalogue of Cheyney Thompson's recent work, including essays by Benjamin D. Piekut and Jennifer Nelson.

## About the artist

At the core of Cheyney Thompson's practice is an analytical approach and commitment to the examination of painting – its production, distribution and presentation in contemporary conditions. He often applies strict sets of principles to the creation of his work, using rules-based systems as generative tools to minimise the subjectivity of creative decisions. The methods for investigation have included such varied structures as mathematical theories, complex algorithms, economic formulas or numerical color systems. The result is a dialogue between the formal qualities of the work and the consciousness of its production.

Cheyney Thompson was born in 1975 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and currently lives and works in New York. He received a BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1997. His work was recently included in 'Low Form. Imaginaries and Visions in the Age of Artificial Intelligence' at MAXXI, Rome, Italy (2019) and in 'Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art, 1965–2018' at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, USA (2019). Thompson's work was the subject of an exhibition with Sam Lewitt at The Brno House of Arts, Brno, Czech Republic (2017). Other solo exhibitions include 'Cheyney Thompson: The Completed Reference: Pedestals and Drunken Walks', at Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany (2012); and 'Cheyney Thompson: metric, pedestal, landlord, cabengo, recit', at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, USA (2012). Select group exhibitions include 'Invisible Adversaries: Marieluise Hessel Collection', Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, USA (2016); 'Money, Good and Evil. A Visual History of Economics', Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden-Baden, Baden-Baden, Germany (2016); 'A Slow Succession with Many Interruptions', San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, USA (2016); 'Materials and Money and Crisis', Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, Austria (2013); and the 2008 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, USA (2008), among others. Thompson's work is held in the permanent collections of the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, USA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, USA; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, USA.

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