

HESSE FLATOW

Michael Childress: *HUB*

January 6 – February 18, 2022

Opening reception: January 6, 6-8pm

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HESSE FLATOW is pleased to announce the opening of *HUB*, an exhibition of paintings by Michael Childress, marking his second solo presentation with the gallery.

For his exhibition *HUB*, Childress presents modular canvases from a never before shown body of work entitled *Bridges and Tunnels*. Consisting of rectangular units that are spaced and stacked vertically in combinations of three or four registers, the series explores languages of minimalism and geometric abstraction as ways to embody and delineate space. Each horizontal bracket forms a kind of grammatical syntax equipped with punctuated voids, bearing likeness to solid and broken lines that encompass trigrams of the *I Ching*. With his signature staining technique, Childress ushers his viewers across his surfaces through subtle transitions between hues, joining left and right, top to bottom, inward and outward. In *Light Blue Lintel*, the motif of the bridge comes forward as its symmetrical legs support a continuous stretch above; in *Tiny Window*, the tunnel takes precedence as concentric fields of color narrow in on a central opening. Depending on one's vantage point, however, the two forms are also interchangeable. Bridges are shallow tunnels, and tunnels are underground bridges – essentially, two sides of the same coin.



Childress's interest in how bridges and tunnels serve as conduits extends into the gallery's architecture. *HUB* installs eighteen works in a grid spanning 360 degrees around a roughly square room, placing the viewer in a central position like the hub of a wheel. Circles and ovals occur regularly within the artist's practice, both as an embodiment of centripetal and centrifugal actions and as a means to disrupt the rigid bounds of the square. This open-ended structure is substantiated through multiple combinations of rehangs that will take place throughout the run of the exhibition, which allows for Childress to shift channels and energies in order to achieve various harmonious states.

Rooted in ancient cosmologies regarding the origins of the universe, Michael Childress's kaleidoscopic abstractions of earthly, celestial, and at times, otherworldly landscapes muse on thresholds of knowledge and perceptions of one's surroundings. Water is an essential component, as the artist wets his canvases before applying pigments, using gravity and surface tension to control the way paint saturates and radiates outward both laterally as well as longitudinally through pictorial depths. This inward recession of color and space engenders a mesmerizing abyss, pulling viewers into an infinite expanse that is symbolized by the ever-elusive periphery of a horizon line. Like that in Nature, order and chaos exist in a delicate balance in Childress's works, as uniform fields and hard edges are met with prismatic plumes and tonal gradations, creating patterns that resemble trajectories of atomic particles, of orbiting planets, and multitudes of configurations in between.

Michael Childress has had solo exhibitions at New Release, New York, NY; New Image Art, Los Angeles, CA; Galerie Julien Cadet, Paris, France; Lane Meyer Projects, Denver, CO; and Cuevas Tilleard, New York, and been included in group exhibitions at Marvin Gardens, New York, NY; Future Gallery, Berlin, Germany; HESSE FLATOW, New York, NY; Half Gallery, New York, NY; Pray For This Gallery, New York, NY; False Flag, New York, NY; Radiator Arts, New York, NY; among others. He is a recipient of the Leslie-Lohman Museum Queer Artists Fellowship and has completed a residency at AS220 (Providence, RI). Childress earned a BFA from the University of Massachusetts in 2009. He lives and works in Massachusetts and New York.

Image: Michael Childress, *Bridges and Tunnels*, 2022.