

MICHAEL STAMM

MEDIATION INC.

January 4 – February 3, 2018

Opening Reception: January 11, 6-8pm



Michael Stamm, *Tincture #1*, 2017. Oil, acrylic, and flashe on linen, 40 x 30 in.

DC Moore Gallery is pleased to announce *Mediation Inc.*, an exhibition of fifteen paintings by Michael Stamm. This will be the artist's first solo exhibition with the gallery. Depicting moments of the everyday in an era of extreme political and cultural volatility, Stamm's work exudes a curious ambivalence. On one hand the paintings emit an air of melancholy, one of the zeitgeists many ailments – but uncritically, not in an attempt to subvert or satirize, but rather to probe, tenderly, at the moment and the contours of feeling that we'd rather keep in the shadows. Indeed, Stamm's subjects wear a certain kind of sadness, always unrepentantly and often literally. But on the other hand, his paintings really *want* to be happy, both embracing and dramatizing the new phenomenon of self-care: the palliatives, the elixirs, the therapies that have become shorthand for *trying* to live a good life under the shadow of capitalism. In the new-millennial epoch, the concept of self-care itself has become an implement of revolution; where the desire to make and sustain meaningful connections is at odds with those who seek to shut down borders, dissolve communications. His work is neither mocking of, nor cynical towards either station but rather approaches both from a metaphysical, abstracted position, centering the figure right at their uneasy nexus. Political without being pugnacious, Stamm creates an intimacy that tries to emphasize rather than grapple with the dialectics of conflict, both external and internal.

Among the works on view are eight separate paintings that iterate single sessions with a therapist. Tacitly referring to his own experience during therapy, in which Stamm often felt unable to look at his therapist in the eyes and so averted his gaze, the paintings only depict a torso in various modes of dress and decoration. Through compositions that seamlessly merge disparate visual and stylistic vocabularies, Stamm's paintings nonetheless present the full range of emotions that might be expressed within confines of a therapist's office and attempt to harmonize the cast of embattled viewpoints that a mediator is designed to navigate. The paintings' outlandish jewelry, inspired by Stamm's own therapist, is overlaid by poetry, text from cybernetics textbooks, lyrics from pop songs. Making motifs out of painted nails, beads, necklaces, flower patterns, pilling sweaters emblazoned with the image of Joan of Arc, Stamm's aesthetic is at once campy and sentimental, queering the archaic masculine lens and vocabulary of psychoanalysis to create a more equitably gendered vision of resolving conflict inspired by his own childhood love of making jewelry and clothing.

In the painting *Causes* (2017), Stamm draws on his enduring interest in incorporating text into the painted surface. The words "causes cause causes to cause causes" dominate the canvas, overlaying a glass of water into which a pair of hands uses a spoon to stir in an Alka-Seltzer tablet, whose bubbling presence has a readymade frisson of its own. Like the tablet, the words effervesce, a cybernetic koan for the contemporary moment. In *Tincture* (2017), flowers traditionally used to uplift the spirit – chamomile, lavender, passion flower and St. John's Wort — crawl around and within a glass vessel while a ginseng root, vaguely anthropomorphic in shape, lounges across the bottom. This is the stuff of alternative medicines and homemade remedies, gifts of the earth with the potential to be repurposed into lifeblood for the anxious, the unwell. Tension exists at the painting's meridian, seemingly bisected by night and day in a way that almost withholds from us the otherwise soothing properties of the solution but also strives towards the beauty, the balance and contentment in life, the achievement of which, as in the paintings, seems precipitously available in a current moment itself difficult to define.

Michael Stamm (b. 1983) was raised in Evanston, Illinois. He received his BA from Wesleyan University and an MA in English Literature from Columbia University before earning an MFA from New York University in 2016. He has also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Stamm's first solo exhibition, *Just Like This Please* was presented at Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New York in 2016. His work has also been shown widely in group exhibitions, amongst them shows at Underdonk, Brooklyn, ASHES/ASHES, Los Angeles, and Galerie Tobias Naehring, Leipzig. Residencies include the Mountain School of Arts, Los Angeles (2017) and Yaddo (2016), and the Vermont Studio Center (2016), where he was awarded the John Imber Painting Fellowship. The artist lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

DC MOORE GALLERY specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. For more information, for photographs, or to arrange a viewing, please call 212-247-2111 or email Peter Luke Colon at pcolon@dcmooregallery.com