

CAMERON SPRATLEY

In The Air Tonight

July 22–August 20, 2021

Opening reception: July 22, 5-8pm

James Fuentes is pleased to present **CAMERON SPRATLEY, *In The Air Tonight***.

In The Air Tonight is chopped and screwed. The chopped and screwed genre is commonly defined by the transformation of popular songs into alternative versions with slowed down tempo and reverb. This modification of the speed and repetition of the lyrics allows the music to be better understood. This process is demonstrated in DJ Screw's rendition of *In The Air Tonight* by Phil Collins. The addition of heavy drums and lethargic vocals instantly brings this soft rock song into the realm of hip hop, merging two very separate worlds and finding a balance where the two can coexist.

The idea of posturing is central to the way that these paintings work. Spratley's screws and knives are personified and antisocial. They dance, they lean on one another, they crowd together, defying gravity, exuding danger and violence. Then fear dissipates with the realization that these sharp, shiny objects are frozen in a liminal space. They would fall over upon entering the real world, rendering themselves harmless. The fallacy of danger can both trigger violent actions and protect you from them. These survival strategies rooted in agonistic behavior are an everyday occurrence for some when moving through urban communities, and they drive much of hip hop music. The chopped and screwed screws and knives are a visualization of the same sort of code-switching required to maneuver today's world.

Popular culture is a grab bag for the existential provocation at the core of Spratley's work. Collaged elements throughout the paintings on view feature cultural icons, news alerts announcing active protests, a still from *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), a masked Iceberg Slim, and the title of Lil' Kim's 1996 album *Hard Core*, among others. While seemingly indiscriminate, relationships form between these paintings hung in space, the images they contain, and the looming burden of the outside world—attempting to connect to the black collective unconscious through the language and culture of hip hop music.

Cameron Spratley (b. 1994 in Manassas, VA; lives and works in Chicago, IL) has presented solo exhibitions with James Fuentes Online, M. LeBlanc, Chicago, and Demon Leg, New York; and has been included in group exhibitions at Arcadia Missa, London; UGLY, Chicago; Pilot Projects, Philadelphia; and ADA Gallery, Richmond, among others. Spratley received his MFA at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University. Spratley collaborated with Monkey Paw Studios on the upcoming remake of *Candyman*, set in Chicago.

For further information, please contact James Fuentes at james@jamesfuentes.com or Katrin Lewinsky at kl@jamesfuentes.com.