

TRENTON DOYLE HANCOCK AND PHILIP GUSTON PRESENTED IN DIALOGUE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN JEWISH MUSEUM EXHIBITION

Jewish Museum

Exhibition Examines How Legacies of White Supremacism, Racism, and Antisemitism Have Impacted the Lives of Black and Jewish Americans for Generations

Press Preview: Thursday, November 7, 9:30 to 11:30 am

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New York, NY, October 15, 2024— *Draw Them In, Paint Them Out: Trenton Doyle Hancock Confronts Philip Guston* examines Philip Guston's influence on Trenton Doyle Hancock and both artists' shared commitment to investigating the legacy of white supremacy in the United States. On view November 8, 2024, through March 30, 2025, the exhibition presents the work of painter Philip Guston (American, b. Canada 1913–1980), the child of Jewish immigrants from Odessa (present-day Ukraine), and Trenton Doyle Hancock (American, b. 1974), a leading Black contemporary artist based in Houston, Texas, in dialogue for the first time. The exhibition explores resonant connections between their work and the role that artists play in the pursuit of social justice.

Organized by the Jewish Museum, the exhibition features key works by Guston including his now iconic, late satirical Ku Klux Klan paintings in dialogue with major works Hancock created in response to his inspirational mentor, highlighting their parallel thematic explorations of the nature of evil, self-representation, otherness, and art activism. Foregrounding works that depict the Klan, the exhibition demonstrates how both artists engage with and at times even inhabit these hateful figures to explore their own identities and more broadly examine systems of institutionalized power and their feelings of complicity within them. Yet, despite the difficult subject matter and at times violent imagery presented in their work, both Hancock and Guston share an ability to conquer the pain and emotion of their art through humor that is both dark and undeniable, engaging with their shared embrace of the visual language of comics.

Philip Guston, whose early social realist and abstract work ultimately evolved into an idiosyncratic form of social satire, is now one of the most revered painters of the twentieth century. Significant examples of Guston's buffoonish Klansmen paintings and drawings from the late 1960s and early 1970s, selected by Hancock, will be a centerpiece of the exhibition. Guston's cartoonish style was used to defy the Klan's bigotry as racial tensions roiled America—tensions that continue to resonate with renewed urgency today. Guston also used the hooded figure as an alter-ego wrestling with his Jewish identity and his assimilation into American culture. This phenomenon is illustrated especially in

Guston's masterful *The Studio* (1969), which depicts the artist as a Klansman painting a self-portrait, acknowledging his own complicity with white supremacy.

For the eclectic artist, cartoonist, and illustrator Trenton Doyle Hancock, Guston's work has been a consistent source of inspiration for nearly 30 years. His collaged psychedelic canvases similarly draw on the language of comics to challenge and comment upon the American condition. The exhibition includes Hancock's surreal graphic memoir that interweaves Guston's biography with his own family tree and reports of Klan activity in the United States, past and present. Titled *Epidemic! Presents: Step and Screw!* (2014), the series has since developed into a substantial body of work in which Hancock's long-standing avatar, a Black superhero named Torpedoboy, meets and engages with Guston's Klan-hooded alter-ego. Through this series, Hancock confronts his artistic forefather and examines their respective motivations for grappling with white supremacism in their art.

Draw Them In, Paint Them Out builds upon the Jewish Museum's ongoing commitment to exploring contemporary art in real time, providing a platform for each new generation of artists. The Museum also shares a foundational history with Guston's work including the artist's solo exhibition in 1966, just before the emergence of his late Klan imagery, and his seminal role in *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976* on view in 2008. The current exhibition joins a fall program at the Museum that tells complex stories from multiple points of view to spark dialogue around how society engages with and learns from historical narratives. By addressing complex and often painful histories, these stories offer opportunities to create a sense of unity around shared experiences and inspire hopeful paths toward the future.

The exhibition is organized in four thematic sections:

Co-Conspirators

The first section examines Guston's and Hancock's first forays into Klan imagery, produced in their young adulthoods. This gallery includes Guston's *Drawing for Conspirators* (1930), a troubling image of the aftermath of a lynching that speaks to the toll of white supremacy in the United States. Guston's mural of another lynching scene (c. 1931), painted for the John Reed Club to commemorate the plight of the Scottsboro Boys, will be presented in facsimile form, as the original work was destroyed by the Los Angeles police and the KKK.

Guston's early, politically motivated works will be presented alongside Hancock's representations of Loid, a fictitious ghost of a 1950s Black sharecropper who appears as half Klansman, half Klan victim, conceived by the



artist around the time of his discovery of Guston's work in the mid-1990s. This harbinger of vengeance, portrayed with a white sheet and noose and wielding a hammer of justice, first emerged in a photographic self-portrait (*Properties of the Hammer*, 1994) by Hancock at the age of 19, and has recurred in various iterations in drawings (*Judgment #2*, 2000), cartoons, and paintings (*Coloration Coronation*, 2016) to the present day.

K-K Kan I Help You?

This next section features a selection of significant late Klansmen paintings and drawings by Guston, including *The Studio* (1969) and *Riding Around* (1969). These works represent Guston's renewed exploration of the Klan, an exercise in both social satire and self-condemnation, following a resurgence of Klan activity in response to the advancements made by the civil rights movement in the United States.

This section also features Hancock's *Epidemic! Presents: Step and Screw!* (2014), the graphic series created by Hancock "as a kind of one-liner: what would happen if my alter-ego Torpedoboy met Philip Guston's alter-ego, the Klansman?" *Step and Screw!* marks the first time Hancock dealt explicitly with his and his family's personal ties to America's haunted past. In 30 black-and-white panels, Hancock contrasts the dark comedy of his comic strip with a fantastical timeline that blends Guston's and Hancock's life stories and delves into their generational traumas.

Conception and Execution

The third section of the exhibition focuses on Hancock's paintings that grew out of *Step and Screw!* The majority of these mixed media works, which fuse image and text and recombine elements from the original comic book, focus on the "pregnant" moment of exchange between the Klansman and Torpedoboy. In each new iteration, the characters engage in a dubious handoff, with the hooded figure offering the skeptical superhero an object associated with wisdom, be it a lightbulb, an apple, or a head. Works on view include *Step and Screw: The Star of Code Switching* (2020) from the Jewish Museum's collection, in which the Klansman offers a talisman so powerful that Torpedoboy's racial transformation is instantaneous and *Lights Out* (2023), in which Torpedoboy ends his tenuous affinity with the Klansman, enacting a symbolic patricide.

The Ladder of Coincidence

The final section of the exhibition serves as a coda to the presentation with a single pair of monumental paintings, Guston's *The Ladder* (1978) and Hancock's *The Former and the Ladder or Ascension and a Cinchin'* (2012). These works illustrate the "umbilical connection" that Hancock has described feeling toward his predecessor, and how Guston's influence and imagery have subconsciously found their way into many facets of Hancock's work.



Organization

This exhibition is organized by Rebecca Shaykin, Curator, The Jewish Museum, in partnership with Trenton Doyle Hancock. The exhibition is designed by Isometric Studio with graphic design by Morcos Key.

Publication

A lavishly illustrated companion volume, co-published with Yale University Press and designed by the award-winning firm Morcos Key, will feature a lead essay by curator Rebecca Shaykin, with additional contributions by Trenton Doyle Hancock, the veteran curator and noted Black American art scholar Valerie Cassel Oliver, and the celebrated American Jewish comic artist Art Spiegelman. The texts offer multiple perspectives on the current political moment and the ways in which art, popular comics, personal narrative, and humor can deepen our understanding of Black and Jewish experiences in the United States. The book will be available worldwide and from the Jewish Museum Shop for \$45. Available in November 2024.

Public Programs

Programs will include:

- A series of conversations featuring Trenton Doyle Hancock and notable figures, including one on [Thursday, November 14, at 6:30 pm](#) between the artist and Musa Mayer, daughter of Philip Guston and President of the Guston Foundation, moderated by curator Rebecca Shaykin.
- Curator Rebecca Shaykin will conduct a virtual tour of the exhibition co-presented with 92NY on [Monday, November 25, at 10:30 am](#).
- Brooklyn-based guitar ensemble Dither Quartet will play compositions by Julius Eastman and Morton Feldman on [Thursday, December 5, 7:30 pm](#), co-presented with Bang on a Can.
- A screening of *The Ballad of Philip Guston* with filmmaker Jem Cohen on [Thursday, December 12, at 6:30pm](#).
- Jewish Museum educators will offer a series of Art in Context courses titled "Draw Them In, Paint Them Out: Confronting Hate through Art," pairing the current exhibition with the Museum's 2013 exhibition *Art Spiegelman's Co-Mix: A Retrospective*. The first two-part virtual course will be offered on [Tuesdays, December 3 and 10, from 6 to 7 pm](#).
- Nationally recognized civil rights activist Eric K. Ward, author of "Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism," will give a lecture on Thursday, February 6 at 6:30 pm.
- The Jewish Museum will also engage visitors in adult studio art workshops and access programs and offer in-person and virtual tours of the exhibition.

Audio Guide

Accompanying the exhibition are two interpretive guides available in the Jewish Museum's digital guide on Bloomberg Connects, the free arts and culture app.



The general audio tour features exhibition curator Rebecca Shaykin, artist Trenton Doyle Hancock, and Musa Mayer, Philip Guston's daughter and president of the Guston Foundation. The Verbal Description guide for visitors who are blind or have low vision will translate the visual into spoken word. All materials will include transcriptions and will be available on the Museum's website. Bloomberg Connects is accessible for either onsite or offsite visits and can be downloaded to any mobile device. [Download the free app.](#)

Support

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About the Jewish Museum

The Jewish Museum is an art museum committed to illuminating the complexity and vibrancy of Jewish culture for a global audience. Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, in the landmarked Warburg mansion, the Jewish Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is one of the oldest Jewish museums in the world. The Museum offers diverse exhibitions and programs and maintains a unique collection of nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, and media reflecting the global Jewish experience over more than 4,000 years. The public may call 212.423.3200 or visit TheJewishMuseum.org for more information.

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