

# ADAM HELMS

## HAUNTOLOGY NOT REALLY NOW NOT ANY MORE

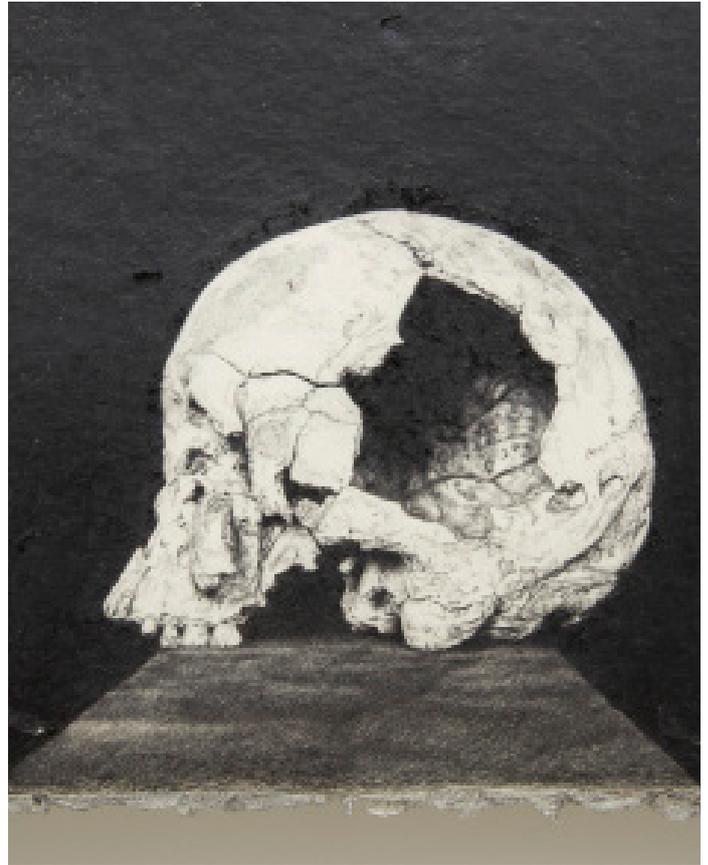
Mar 11, 201 – Apr 15, 2017

GRIMM is pleased to present *Hauntology (not really now not any more)*, Adam Helms' second solo exhibition at the gallery, that will be on view at GRIMM Keizersgracht.

Helms is primarily known for exploring the visual motifs underlying images of subcultures, symbols of violence and historical archetypes. Through the assembling, archiving and appropriating of mass-mediated and internet-sourced photographic material, Helms has investigated notions of the performed identities of opposition groups, notions of the heroic versus the anti-heroic and aspects of tropes surrounding masculine identity.

In *Hauntology: Swamp Thing (Dante and Beatrice)* (2014) and *Hauntology: Silver Surfer (Dante and Beatrice)* (2014), Helms has adopted a Pop Art vocabulary, examining an intimation of heroism as it relates to desire and the concept of the muse. Two lasercut panels feature comic covers from the artist's personal collection, showing two All American super-heroic archetypal figures carrying the vulnerable female muse out of harm's way. From the titles, these two male protagonists are juxtaposed by two classical predecessors: Dante and Beatrice. Here the roles are reversed, for it is Beatrice—the lifelong but secret object of Dante's love, appearing in the *Divine Comedy* as one of his guides—being the one saved and led from danger.

Three large-scale works on paper, *Repression (The Thing) #1, #2 and #3* (2016), demonstrate the artist's extraordinary drawing skills. Helms has positioned the classical *Vanitas* symbol of the skull against a dark vacuum. In a Rothko-esque manner, Helms has repressed the colors by applying multiple layers of graphite, and through this process, tearing the paper surface, allowing the bright aniline to shine through. These drawings are metaphorical 'landscape' images as much as they are representations of the individual and the unknown. Four smaller pieces were executed in a similar way, with the dye being applied in a triangular pattern, representing a notion of the infinite within the picture plane. The images at their



Adam Helms, *Repression (The Thing) #2 | detail* (2016)

centre feature The Dodge Ram logo, The Chrysler Imperial emblem from the 1950's, the Death's Head Moth and finally the Nazi Totenkopf, suggesting alliances between commerce, power and the occult and signaling fascist tendencies within the contemporary political landscape of the United States.

Both the impulses behind Helms' artistic practice and the sensations his work evokes, can be related to the 'Uncanny' and the 'Sublime', two concepts linking psychology to art. The Freudian notion of the Uncanny describes the disconcerting feeling when something is simultaneously familiar and foreign. The Sublime here points to the conflicting emotions of fascination and fear, feeling both attracted and appalled, while the viewer is at a safe distance from the depicted subject. The exhibition's title: *Hauntology (not really now not any more)*—both a reference to a series of essays by Mark Fisher called, *Ghosts Of My Life* (2014) and to Alan Garner's novel *Red Shift* (1973)—and points to the eerie quality of the works and above all to a nostalgia for the future, a future that feels unattainable and lost.

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Adam Helms, *Repression (The Thing) #3* (2016)

Adam Helms (1974, Tucson) lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Uncanny Valley* at Marianne Boesky, New York (2014), *Weight of Culture* at Artpace, San Antonio (2014) and *Pathos Formula* at Alm-ine Rech, Brussels (2013). His work has been included in several group shows: *November's Bone* at Halsey Mckay Gallery, East Hampton, NY (2016), *It/Ego* at Brennan & Griffin, New York (2016), *Territorial Drift*, curated by Yasmijn Jarram at Garage Rotterdam, Rotterdam (2016), *Ghost Current* at V1 Gallery, Copenhagen (2014) and *Heel Gezellig*, curated by Matthew Day Jackson at GRIMM, Amsterdam (2011). Institutional group shows include:

*Second Nature: Contemporary Landscapes* from the MFAH Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, TX (2011), *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York (2010) and *Skin Fruit*, The Dakis Joannou Collection, curated by Jeff Koons at the New Museum in New York (2010). Helms received the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2010. His work is included in the permanent collections of the Walker Art Center (MN), the Whitney Museum (NY), the Guggenheim Museum (NY), and The Yale Art Gallery (CT).

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