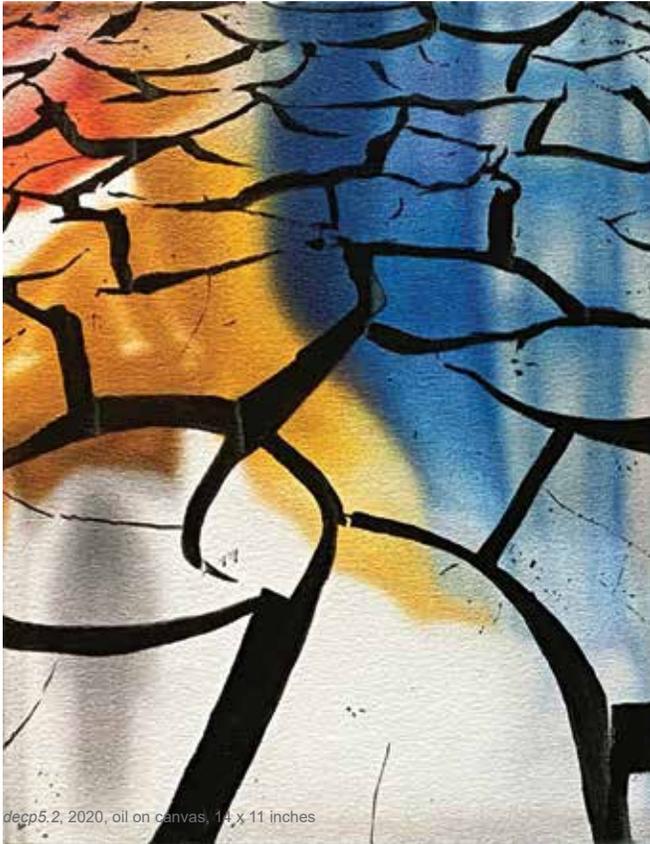


## Michael Cody Drury: Infinite Jux

January 25 – May 3, 2020



decp5.2, 2020, oil on canvas, 14 x 11 inches

Nearly twenty years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and many of us are still grappling with the speed with which information moves. If the speed doesn't confuse us, the enormous number and variety of sources of the information might. If the number of sources doesn't overwhelm us, then the fact that we receive information that is serious and trivial, honest and dishonest, tragic and humorous, and mostly combinations of all of these during a single sitting with our favorite electronic device should drive us crazy.

But it doesn't. And as weird and new in the annals of human history as our information explosion is, most of us crave even more. We have adapted to having every possible thing or idea presented to us outside of a larger, more meaningful context. We see, read, watch, and listen, and then we move on to see, read, watch, and listen some more.

Michael Cody Drury was born in Sioux City in 1984, making it through elementary school before the internet and Photoshop became common parts of our lives, and making it through high school before most people owned a cell phone, and making it to graduate school before the first iPhone was released. This is to say, Michael knows what life was like before everyone became connected to everything electronically. However, he has been at the right age to adapt to each of these incredible shifts in how we receive and think about information.

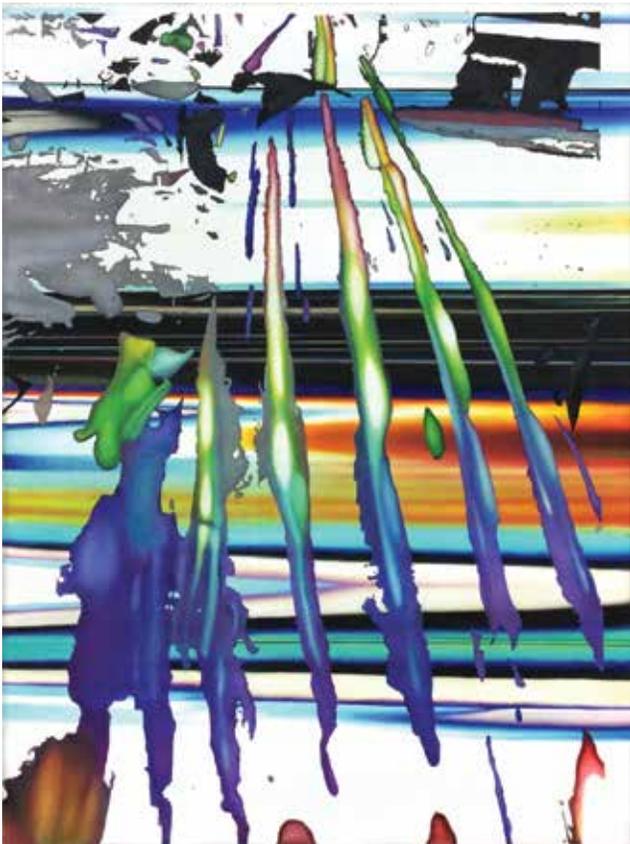


jux, 2016, oil on canvas, 35 x 26 inches

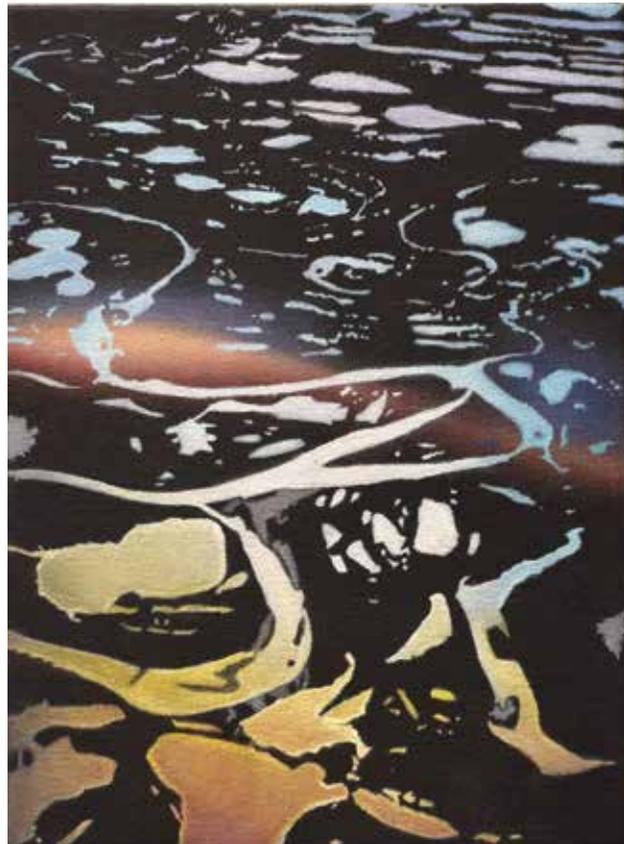
Michael began the series, *Infinite Jux*, in 2015. These oil paintings are united by Michael's experimentation with the illusion of 3D space on a 2D surface. The "Jux" refers to juxtaposition, in this case the juxtaposition of foreground and background shapes and colors. Unsurprisingly, the source of his images is, more often than not, the internet. The gathering of the images comes from random places at different times, and then are selected for use in paintings at a separate moment. The paintings are created after Michael composes work on his computer using a variety of juxtapositions of images. Once he finds one "that feels most 'alive,'" he uses what he has created on his screen as a preliminary sketch.

So, how are we to think about these paintings?

The first way in which you can understand Michael's juxtapositions is as a form of visual crossfading. Crossfade is a term used primarily to refer to the use of audio equipment to transition from one recording to another, such as what DJs do as they seamlessly glide from one song to the next, with a brief period in which both tracks overlap. Michael consciously thinks about the relationship between his foreground images and his background as the visual equivalent of two different tracks, and works to meld them like a DJ, "creating something spontaneous and unique to the moment."



Sep1, 2015, oil on canvas, 32 x 24 inches



Love5, 2020, oil on canvas, 12 x 8 inches

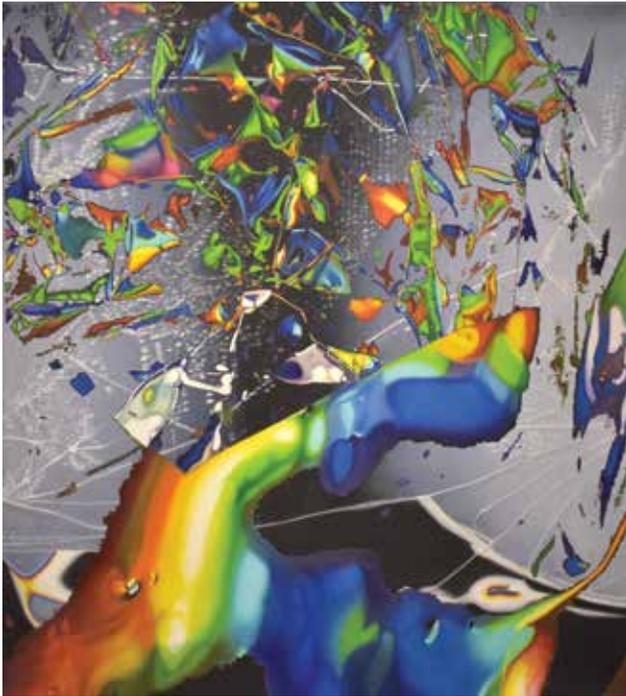
The second consideration when looking at Michael's paintings is the inspiration for the title of the series. *Infinite Jux* plays on the well-known, satirical, "post-post-modern" novel by David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest*, one of the most groundbreaking novels of the last 25 years. Wallace brought together an incredible variety of real, fictional, literary, and mythological people, places, and things into a time period in which years were defined not by numbers, but by names. The two primary plot lines are assembled in a way that, even after more than 1,000 pages, leaves readers to reach their own conclusions about their interconnections and resolutions. Similarly, Michael brings together images that do not fully identify themselves either individually or in relationship to each other. What we see is up to us to define and resolve.

A third framework within which we can think about Michael's paintings is his interest in the ideas of Marshall McLuhan, a professor and theorist whose most influential work was as a media theorist, coining the expression, "The medium is the message." Though his interests were unrelated to visual art, McLuhan used the art and Gestalt psychological terms "figure" and "ground" to describe the impact of mass media on communication. Typically in art, the terms are used to discuss the definition of an artwork's foreground (the "figure") and background (the "ground"). McLuhan warned against paying too much attention to the figure—the content—of a message and too little on its ground, or context. Michael

deliberately plays with our instinct to focus on the figure, splicing together imagery to make us aware of the edges where figure and ground meet.

As a visual artist, Michael wants us to really think about how we use our vision to make sense of things that are unrelated except for their occurrence at the same time or same place. He wants us not just to identify the things (or shapes or colors) that we are seeing, but to think about their relationships to each other: their relative importance and how they interact with each other. At the same time, he is aware that the ways in which we view art are symbolically connected to the ways we view both the physical world and the virtual world of images and information that impacts many of our lives. Even if we are staring at the same thing, each of us is seeing or focusing on something slightly different from everyone else. And, in our current technological environment in which complexity is frequently boiled down into headlines begging for clicks, Michael asks us to look past the clickbait, search for the wider meanings, and draw our own conclusions.

Michael Drury is a 2006 graduate of Morningside College with a Bachelor's degree in art. After graduating from Morningside, he moved to New York, where he received a Master of Fine Arts degree from the School of Visual Arts. He has lived and worked in Queens, New York since then.



Aug59, 2015, oil on canvas, 52 x 44 inches



June06, 2015, oil on canvas, 50 x 44 inches

cover:

(L) *b15*, 2016, oil on canvas, 64 x 48 inches, Sioux City Art Center Permanent Collection

(R) *NSep15.2*, 2015, oil on canvas, 34 x 24 inches, From the collection of Alan and Terri Parish McGaffin