

TONY RAVE

MICHAEL JESUS CRISIS



M CONTEMPORARY ART
205 EAST 9 MILE
FERNDAL, MI 48220
MCONTEMPORARYART.COM

SEPT 9 - OCT 8, 2022

A Sophisticated Rage

The artist Tony Rave respectfully requests you bring a blank mind to what you're about to see.

To lay eyes on even a single work in his new solo exhibition at M Contemporary Art, Michael Jesus Crisis, is to join Rave on a dive into cultural discomfort with artful purpose, and at times biting comical commentary. Rave wants you to question something; maybe rethink everything. He has! The exhibition's title alludes to some of Rave's intent and into the wild collision of ideas and imagery awaiting you on the gallery's walls and floors. The mashed up words are the only subtlety connect with the show, an array of reconfigured objects and figurines, most dipped in blackface, centerpieces of a full-on juxtaposition of arguably sacred American iconography and the artist's deep distaste with what he declares as a forced cultural worship of images such as NBA great Michael Jordan and portrayals of Jesus Christ as a white man and the most recognizable face of white innocence.

(Several of the pieces feature Air Jordans and angelic figurines literally bound together, as if they're wrestling to determine which is superior.)

"I'm trading the cross for the Jordan jump man symbol, the effect this one symbol and one man had on pop culture—the God of materialism.

Some people will get it immediately the way I'm putting these things on top of each other to show what's been done."

This is Rave at his rawest.

"They called him Black Jesus when he was playing." And what to make of the crisis portion of the title? Here it's worth noting that not all of Rave's references in this body of work are in fact rooted in rage.

"When my daughter was younger she used to say Jesus Crisis because she couldn't say Christ. I'm playing with everything around me with play on worship and how images get turned into gods," Rave explains.

Michael Jesus Crisis is also Rave's invite for discerning minds to join him in the reclamation of critical thought. "What I'm doing is meant to have people have conversations with their own selves. Some of it's serious but some of it's funny if you're ready to question what iconography does to culture and thought. I'm purposefully desecrating images that have infected our subconscious without really questioning it."

Rave is ready for some viewers' possible revolt. The likelihood is predictable and even understandable; a Black man pointedly putting a "hood" spin and Black face on symbols of white innocence and white godliness. In the show, only viewers' minds and openness are sacred to Rave; not the angel, not the cherub, not the (American) dollar bill. Rave takes sly aim also at some symbols of Black urban culture and households. Arman Hammer, Colonel Sanders are here along with black-eyed-peas and bottles upon bottles of Hennessy, the pseudo sacred sip of choice for the (Black) culture, are also reinterpreted by Rave as symbols of the draining of Black tastes for white profit. "We (Black people) buy everything from everybody. That's why you see companies consistently advertising to us. We play the role of keeping money cycling. Just like we were when we were brought to this country. (Hennessy is made by one of the world's largest producers of French cognac.)

"I want to bring down the idea of any (of) these images being pushed on us as godlike or worshiped. There's this responsibility to question what we've been fed and what we're still being fed in America."

He adds, "But first I have to make you see the propaganda in the image by taking it down to the level of pop art. I'm trying to do everything within art to make it beautiful but also not make some work that just sacrificing the images of Black people to get the point across in your mind."

Resist the urge to reduce Rave to an angry artist. "This is art trying to express what manipulation looks like, what it does. I'm not crying about it; I'm not screaming at anybody."

As for you Dear Viewer, your reaction is out of Rave's hands. "This is me as an artist, sitting around expressing a truth we can all see; I'm just trying to find a way to be honest about the roles we play and to feel better about understanding what's happening."

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Nichole M. Christian is a writer and veteran journalist. She has worked as creative director, editor and lead writer for the Kresge Foundation's annual eminent artist monograph series. The titles include: *A Palette for The People* (2021), honoring painter and educator, Shirley Woodson; *Wonder and Flow*, (2020) honoring ceramicist Marie Woo, and *A Life Speaks*, (2019) honoring poet and activist Gloria House. Nichole was also coauthor of *Canvas Detroit*. Her writing also appears in the poetry chapbook, *Cypher*, summer 2021; *Portraits 9/11/01: The Collected Portraits of Grief* from *The New York Times*; the online arts journal, *Essay'd*; *A Detroit Anthology*, and *Dear Dad: Reflections on Fatherhood*.

Photography: CJ Benninger

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The Birth of Gucci 2022
Swarovski crystals, porcelain
figures, glass, enamel paint, resin
24 x 8 inches

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Untitled, 2019
Swarovski crystals, porcelain
figures, glass, enamel paint, resin
and mixed media
11 x 8 1/2 inches

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Untitled, 2020

KFC bucket, Swarovski crystals,
porcelain figure, enamel paint,
resin
13 x 20 x 4 1/2 inches

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Untitled, 2020

Swarovski crystals, porcelain
figures, enamel paint, resin and
Nike sneaker
20 x 9 inches

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Ron, 2022
Baking soda, baking soda boxes,
resin, enamel paint
30 x 30 x 6 inches

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The Colonel, 2022
Glass bottles, cognac, enamel
paint, on panel
30 x 30 x 6 inches

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Untitled, 2021

Plaster, enamel paint, black eye
peas, glass and gold leaf
13 x 8 inches

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Untitled, 2021
Plaster, enamel paint, black eyed
peas
11 1/2 x 7 inches

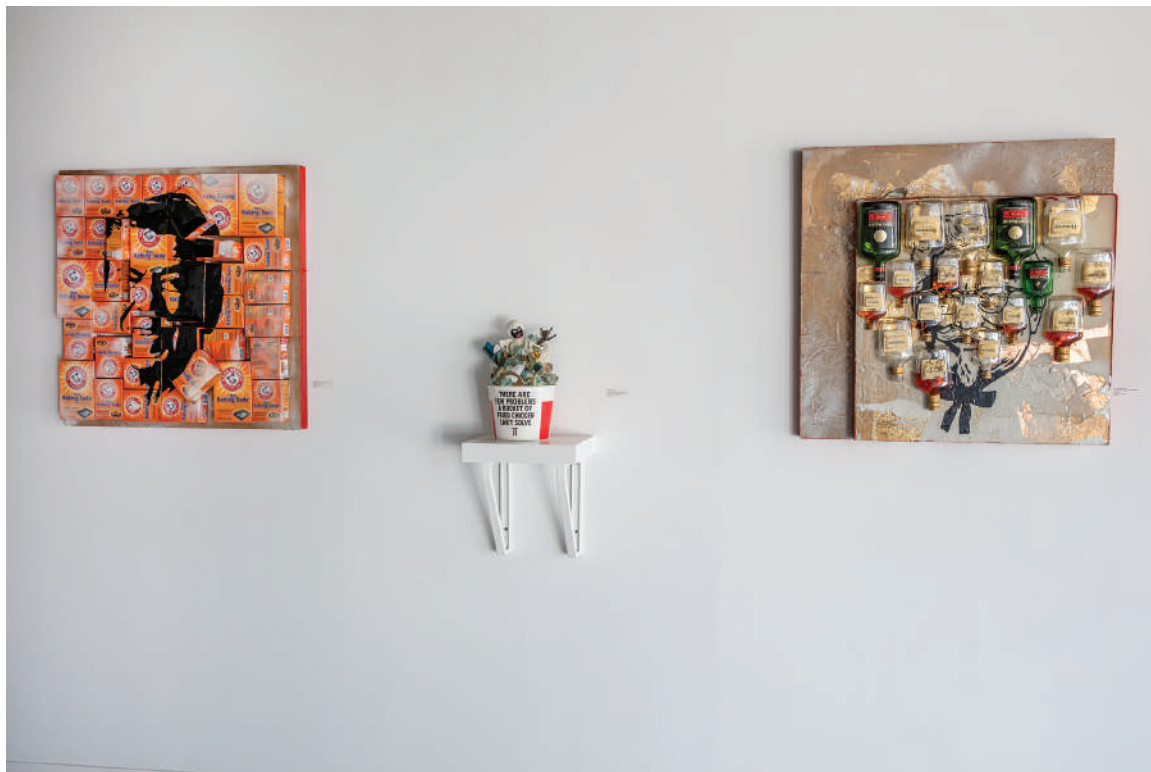
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Untitled, 2021
Porcelain, enamel paint, gold leaf
14 1/2 x 10 x 3 inches

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Untitled, 2021

Glass, resin, enamel paint, decals,
porcelain, gold leaf on panel
29 x 19 x 5 1/2 inches

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Untitled, 2019

Hennessy bottle , porcelain
figures, gold leaf, glass, resin and
Swarovski crystals
5 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches

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Untitled, 2022

Remy bottle, porcelain figure, gold leaf, glass, resin enamel paint and Swarovski crystals
8 x 5 1/2 inches

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Untitled, 2022

Glass, resin, enamel paint, decals,
porcelain, gold leaf
60 x 36 x 2 1/2 inches

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The Glass Rug, 2022
Swarovski crystals, porcelain
figures, glass, enamel paint, resin
and mixed media
60 x 36 x 2 1/2 inches

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Untitled, 2022
Mayonnaise jar, resin, mixed
media.
6 1/2 x 4 x 4 inches

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Untitled, 2019

Nike Sneaker, porcelain figure,
gold leaf, glass, resin, mixed
media and Swarovski crystals
8 1/2 x 8 x 2 inches

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Untitled, 2021

Nike Sneaker, porcelain, gold leaf,
glass, resin, mixed media and
Swarovski crystals
7 x 12 x 4 1/2 inches

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Untitled, 2022

Nike Sneaker, porcelain figure,
gold leaf, glass, resin, mixed
media and Swarovski crystals
8 x 10 1/2 x 3 inches

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Untitled, 2022

Powder coated desk, acrylic, gold
leaf and mixed media
29 x 34 x 24 inches

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Untitled, 2022

Hennessy bottles , porcelain
figure, gold leaf, glass, resin and
Swarovski crystals
4 1/2 x 5 x 2 1/2 inches (each)

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Untitled, 2022
Bronze, plastic, enamel paint
9 x 7 x 2 inches

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Untitled, 2019
Bronze, plastic, enamel paint
8 x 5 x 3 inches

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Untitled, 2020
Porcelain soap dispenser, enamel
paint
8 x 3 1/2 inches

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Untitled, 2022

Crystal dish with cherub, glass,
black eyed peas and resin
5 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches

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Tony Rave (b. Detroit MI 1986) is a multidisciplinary artist from the east side of Detroit. His work has been supported by Detroit Institute of Arts, the Heidelberg Project, John S. & James Knight Foundation, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, and the Skillman Foundation. Rave participated in The Red Bull House of Art residency program in 2015. Rave cultivates spaces for local artists to express unapologetically revolutionary ideas through their work. Rave co-founded The 48 Hour as a platform to create a network between Black artists in Detroit and Black artists globally. The platform was designed to allow Black Artists to exhibit and grow in their practice. Pigs have been a muse for Rave's work. The animal has allowed him to open up artistically and communicate with depth, humor, and insight into the place pigs hold in our collective imagination and society. Rave works with controversial themes of white propaganda to spark critical conversation about current issues in society. Currently he is working on sculptures deconstructing and layering white propaganda. Revealing the lack of positive representation of Black and Brown communities in America.



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