

Joshua Frankel

One and the same body

PRESS RELEASE

July 13 - August 18, 2024



Opening Reception: Saturday, July 13th, 2024

Standard Space is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works by **Joshua Frankel** about **Crowds**—exploring how we're drawn to crowds, the pleasure we find losing our individuality within them, the joy and terror they can create, and what these profound effects mean for our conceptions of ourselves.

The exhibition features a new extended version of Frankel's highly-acclaimed video work *Within the crowd there is a quality*—the first iteration of which was presented this past fall at New York City's Moynihan Train Hall, and was called "Sensitive" by critic Blake Gopnik in *The New York Times* and "A kinetic cloud of humanity... deliberately subtle" by Laura van Straaten, also in the *Times*.

This work was first created as a four-channel video, presented as an artistic intervention to create a break from advertising once every 15 minutes in the Train Hall, conceived in dialogue with the city, and commissioned by Art for Amtrak.

At Standard Space, a longer form of this video is presented in a single-channel screening room on loop, so audiences can immerse themselves fully in the transcendent ebb and flow of human bodies that Frankel creates with his gestural and calligraphic hand-made animation.

Frankel's crowd is created from an ensemble of 25 animated figures (including a dog and a pigeon) that he has drawn by hand on traditional animation cels, using video footage he captured on New York City sidewalks as reference.

Frankel scans the drawings, assembles each figure into its own animated "walk cycle", then repeats, offsets and rearranges these loops, using both computer code and his own aesthetic intuition. This process weaves together hand-made and algorithmic methods—and the resulting works feel simultaneously deeply human and governed by larger systems—like crowds themselves.

Also in the screening room are two new video works that consider crowds of animals and memories: *One and the same body*, Frankel's rendering of an encounter with synchronous fireflies in the Smoky Mountains, and *Before they can find words for it*, inspired by a walk over an ancient oyster midden beside the Hudson River.

The sculpture, *Exposed to everything and attracting everyone*, is composed of a selection of Frankel's original drawings for *Within the crowd there is a quality*, cut-out and placed in lucite baseball card cases which hang from the ceiling, secured with silver jewelry clasps, creating a chandelier-like cloud of bodies in motion.

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The paintings, kinetic and gestural, express the energy we feel in crowds in ways that words cannot. The compositions are assembled from animation frames, systematically broken apart, inspired by Eadward Muybridge's animal locomotion studies, and reassembled into chaotic

organic forms that evoke abstract expressionists like Jackson Pollock and Perla Fine, murmurations of birds, and *Where's Waldo?*

The unique woodblock prints layer the same ensemble of figures over and over again, until the crowd becomes noise.

The first woodblock series *Abandoning itself freely* uses a single piece of wood and begins with an image of densely overlapping bodies. For each work, the block is carved further—the crowd gets less crowded, clarity emerges—and the block is reprinted.

The second woodblock series *Once it really absorbed all people* does the same while also, at times, flipping the images of people upside down, yielding images that press deeper into abstraction despite being created using only figural drawings.

The titles of the works in this exhibition are passages excerpted from Elias Canetti's distinctive book *Crowds and Power*, written in 1960, which illuminates the human condition through its exploration of crowd dynamics from prehistoric times through the rise of fascism.

Frankel's projects contain animation and physical works in conversation with each other, weaving together hand-made processes with computer code—and wielding both with equal virtuosity. The physical works crystallize time and motion—attributes central to the nature of animation—in material form. Like GIFs you can hold in your hands.

The paintings and sculpture were exhibited at Frankel's solo exhibition at HESSE FLATOW gallery in Chelsea this past fall. The woodblock prints were created at the Wassaic Project. Special thanks to McKinzie Trotta, Natalie Woodlock, Nesli Ciftci and Josh Kesner for their fabrication assistance.

This is the second solo exhibition of works by Frankel at Standard Space.

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