



# COLLECTIVE STRENGTH



WORKS BY COLLECT LEVEL  
 ARTISTS INCLUDING:  
 HECTOR CASANOVA  
 NICOLE CAWLFIELD  
 LORI RAYE ERICKSON  
 JOSE FAUS  
 JOSEPH GREGORY  
 CHRISTEL HIGHLAND  
 MARCELLA LALLY  
 PAUL MALLORY  
 CHICO SAN  
 CHRISTIAN SIMMS  
 HAROLD SMITH  
 SABRINA STAIRES  
 TROY SWANGSTU



Collect Level, hosted by The Leedy-Voukos Art Center, presents:

## *ARTicles for a New Era*

This evolving series will feature artists and their work from Collect Level's Spring 2020 group show titled *Collective Strength* shuttered by the Covid-19 global pandemic. Collect Level was founded by Artists Lori Raye Erickson and Christel Highland to increase success for productive, mid-career regional artists in the Kansas City Region.



## Christian Simms' Playful Provocations

By Christel Highland

Christian Simms' art career began like many do, with an influential high school art teacher. He always enjoyed copying cartoons and comics for fun, but his teacher submitted his work into the Ward Parkway Mall's annual art show without his knowledge, and he won best in show. At first irritated, he eventually relented to his natural passion. Simms majored in fine art and minored in drawing at Central Missouri State University and loved every minute of the one-on-one attention he received.

It was during those years at CMSU that Simms discovered and fell in love with the blind contour, and began to develop his style that persists to this day. After graduation, he stayed and worked odd evening jobs, painting all day. It was during this time dedicated to his art practice, he furthered his exploration of the line, with the blind contour remaining as the first pass at any painting, followed by a layering and thickening, or refining of the line, and a crescendo of color and structure.

Eventually, his uncle asked him to work with him at the much beloved Keith Coldsnow Art Materials in midtown Kansas City. He worked there for ten years and became known around town as the Coldsnow guy. “I learned all about materials, I met a ton of artists, and explored processes.” During that time, he was embraced by none other than Tom Deatherage who made him welcome, showed his work, allowing for further development of his practices.

Simms tends to float between two worlds, mentioning Cezanne, de Kooning, and Schiele as influences, finding balance floating between figurative representation and the freedom one can only find in pure abstraction. “I’ve always loved graphic, hard-edged, graffiti.” He enjoys the playful elevation of the mundane through the exploration of juxtaposition as well. He embraces color, pop culture, digitization, pixelation, and all that consumes contemporary American life on his canvases. In this homage to the masters and embrace of the present lies the tension concealed in plain sight- a hallmark of his work.

Simms' work presents us with images like a hard-edged beretta on a pink background, dragonflies and helicopters, and distorted, irregularly lined figures. These are all skillfully placed upon inescapable, bold backgrounds. Guns, machine guns, tanks, and all sorts of weapons are something he discussed, “I’m not a big fan of firearms. I wanted to play with eliciting certain emotions.” When experiencing these works, there is a dispassion that resonates. It seems as though he’s tapping into a non-judgemental, childlike fascination with the form, the shape of whatever it is he presents: a gun, a tank, or a body. That dispassion is accompanied by bouncing between the very adult and adolescent, delving into cultural motivations- all without pummeling the viewer with conclusions. Simms’ color-fueled, playful approach to the weightiest subject matters allows the viewer to dive in headfirst, making sense of it all later.





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***Wasp No.2, 2010***

Christian Simms

Acrylic on canvas

24 x 35 inches

500

For purchase inquiries, please click on this [link](#).

Back



***Angel, 2012***

Christian Simms  
Acrylic on canvas  
24 x 20 inches  
400

For purchase inquiries, please click on this [link](#).

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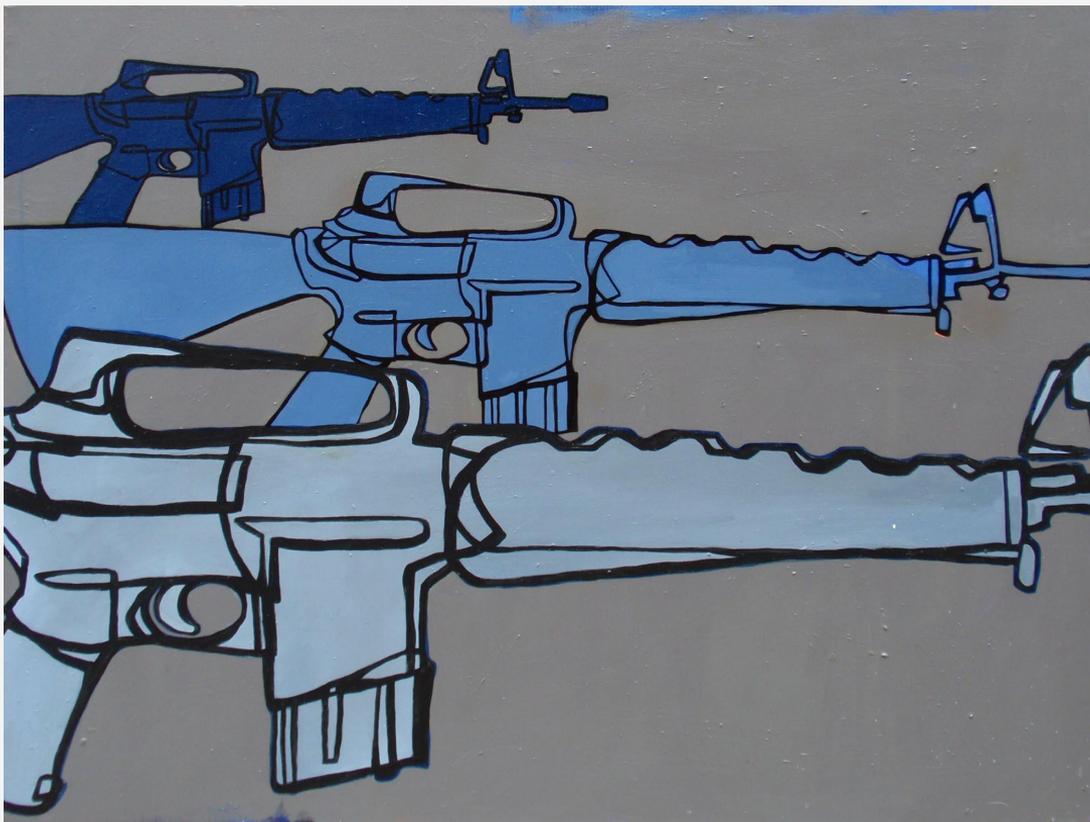


***Mancer, 2018***

Christian Simms  
Acrylic on canvas  
60 x 48 inches  
1500

For purchase inquiries, please click on this [link](#).

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***M16s, 2007***

Christian Simms  
Acrylic on canvas  
30 x 40 inches  
800

For purchase inquiries, please click on this [link](#).

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***Tank No.9 [Exploding], 2012***

Christian Simms

Acrylic and Paper on canvas panel

16 x 20 inches, framed

350

For purchase inquiries, please click on this [link](#).

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