

ARTIST STATEMENT
SMOKE AND MIRRORS
By Courtney Khail

Building upon the visual and conception foundation of her 2022 *ROARSHOCK* collection, contemporary artist Courtney Khail's latest work *SMOKE AND MIRRORS* turns its gaze to the forces- both overt and unseen- that shape our beliefs, perceptions, and sense of truth.

In *ROARSHOCK*, the focus rested on the inkblot itself- a central, celestial form inviting viewers to explore the subjectivity of perception. In *SMOKE AND MIRRORS*, each piece directly mirrors its *ROARSHOCK* counterpart, yet shifts the emphasis to the negative space surrounding the inkblot. This inversion draws attention to what is often overlooked: the absence that defines the presence, the context that frames content, and the subtle cues that can quietly alter meaning.

Much like navigating a world saturated with propaganda, social bias, and curated narratives, *SMOKE AND MIRRORS* asks us to look beyond the obvious image. The truth is not always in the boldest stroke- it may reside in the quiet margins, in what is omitted, or in the distractions designed specifically to obscure it. By presenting familiar compositions in an unfamiliar way, Khail challenges viewers to reconsider not just what they see, but how and why they see it.

Through this pairing, the two bodies of work engage in a dialogue: *ROARSHOCK* probes the shapes we recognize, while *SMOKE AND MIRRORS* exposes the spaces we ignore. Together they invite a deeper interrogation of perception itself- one that acknowledges the noise, the gaps, and the illusions that shape our understanding of the world.