

TEMPLON



Press release
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MICHAEL RAY CHARLES

Afrochemistry
30 April - 26 July 2024



Michael Ray Charles
(Forever Free) Head 4, 2005

Acrylic latex and copper penny on canvas, 89 × 59 in.

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This spring, Galerie Templon is presenting the third solo exhibition of work by African American artist Michael Ray Charles with the invaluable help of the exhibition's curator, Hedwig Van Impe. "Afrochemistry" features a series of five large canvases and twelve small red nose portraits on cardboard centring on the representation of black identity.

Since the 1990s, Michael Ray Charles has become a widely recognised artist with a pioneering approach to investigating African-American questions. He draws on his inexhaustible fund of energy and capacity to transcend linguistic, cultural and geographic boundaries to create visual archives that stand as a personal chronicle of an African-American history rooted in both terror and light, freedom and slavery, racism and humanity, guilt and responsibility.

With Afrochemistry, Charles delicately juggles between idea and image to explore the way African-Americans are represented physically and the resulting moral prejudices. The figures depicted in close-up radiate a feeling of depth and truth that has the disconcertingly powerful effect of questioning our perceptions and emotional connection with others. The features Charles gives the faces, as expressive as they are static, not only offer an examination of sensitive social issues but also serve as a catalyst for social change in modern-day America.

Born in 1967 in Lafayette, Louisiana, USA, Michael Ray Charles currently lives and works in Austin, Texas, USA, and Gand, Belgium. He spent most of his youth in California and Louisiana. He studied design and advertising for three and a half years before being awarded a BFA degree in 1989. He went on to obtain an MFA in 1993 at the University of Houston, Texas, before teaching at the University of Texas in Austin. His work features in a wide range of public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Arizona State University Art Museum and San Antonio Museum of Art in Texas. He has been represented by Galerie Templon since 2001.

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