

PAT PHILLIPS

American, born Lakenheath, England, 1987

Yall Wanna See a Dead Body?, 2017

Acrylic, pencil, reflective tape, reflective glass beads, airbrush, and aerosol paint on canvas (diptych), 48 × 108 inches (overall)

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Pat Phillips creates highly textured, representational paintings that combine a variety of media, from acrylic and spray paint to glass beads. *Yall Wanna See a Dead Body?* is part of a series of works that Phillips began in 2017, loosely based on his life growing up in suburban Louisiana. Created in a two-panel format and at a large scale, the work commands careful contemplation of its subject matter and its expressive, painterly surface [DETAIL OPPOSITE; DIPTYCH ON FOLLOWING SPREAD].

In *Yall Wanna See a Dead Body?* Phillips engages in a multilayered juxtaposition of pop culture references. The title is based on a line from the 1991 film *Boyz n the Hood*, which made a strong impression on Phillips. Written and directed by John Singleton, the film was a coming-of-age story based on Singleton's life growing up as a young African American in South Central Los Angeles in the 1980s. The depicted scene directly references one from the film, down to the clothing and gestures of the figures. In the film four adolescents encounter a dead human body near train tracks in their neighborhood. This scene itself is a reference to a similar one from *Stand by Me* (Dir. Rob Reiner, 1985), a parallel coming-of-age film in which four young white boys go on a hike in 1950s Oregon and find the dead body of a missing boy. In *Yall Wanna See a Dead Body?* Phillips turns this encounter on its head and injects it with wry humor. The figures are transported to the landscape of suburban Louisiana, alongside Interstate 49, and the body they encounter is a deer. While the skid marks imply that the deer was the casualty of highway traffic—a typical scene on busy interstates—Phillips's rendering of the animal evokes the animated film *Bambi* (1942). *Bambi* was also a coming-of-age narrative, one in which the protagonists develop and grow, seeking to preserve some of their childhood innocence, carefreeness, and curiosity in an environment marked by loss, echoing the themes invoked in Phillips's painting.

—Janet Dees

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