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***Evidence for Contact* catalogs outsider artist Ken Grimes’s visionary body of work and his endless variations on the theme of extraterrestrial life**

by Ken Grimes (Artist), Seth Shostak (Foreword), Alejandra Russi (Introduction), Frank Maresca (Afterword)

“...the veteran artist Ken Grimes gives a full sense of his illustrational style and his obsession with science-fiction and things extraterrestrial, paying homage to figures like Carl Sagan and Arthur Clarke” **Roberta Smith, New York Times**

Over several decades, noted outsider artist Ken Grimes has developed his singular style—using text, numbers, symbols, and geometric shapes painted primarily in stark black and white—to prompt his audience to consider the possibilities and implications of alien contact with Earth. ***Evidence for Contact: Ken Grimes 1993 - 2021 (Anthology Editions, Hard Cover US\$45)*** showcases the artist's nearly forty-year painting career, with an accompanying exhibition of Grimes’s work opening October 26, 2023, at Ricco/Maresca Gallery New York. Grimes’s work will also be presented at Parrasch Heijnen Gallery in Los Angeles on January 16, 2024, and at Galerie Christian Berst in Paris on February 8, 2024. *Evidence for Contact* is available on 10/09 exclusively on our webshop and worldwide on 10/24.

The possibility of contact with extraterrestrials has consumed Ken Grimes since he saw the 1958 sci-fi film *The Space Children* as a fourteen-year-old boy. Unlike much of today’s space narratives—whose creatures are drawn to Earth for sinister reasons—the aliens were good guys, a point that has made a lasting impression on the artist. *Evidence for Contact* documents his never-ending exploration of extraterrestrial intelligence, their existence, the deceptions surrounding their existence, and the cosmic synchronicities that reveal their presence.

Creating his personal mythology using references taken from astronomy texts, imagery, science fiction iconography, and pop culture, Grimes is looking for hidden messages to decode how life on our planet is influenced and shaped by such visitors. As part of his practice, Grimes has searched for discrepancies in written accounts of Project Ozma—a search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) experiment started in 1960 by Cornell University astronomer Frank Drake—which he believes left a paper trail of evidence that alien interference did, in fact, occur.

Grimes’s paintings and works on paper have mostly maintained a monochrome, stark palette. This constraint is meant to give his message visual clarity representing his pursuit of the truth. His paintings oscillate between imaginative, whimsical, and stern but are often all three. Some are reminiscent of the schematic figuration of binary code translated into pictographs, others present mystical landscapes or interiors filled with simplified figures, of everything from galactic radio maps to figures borrowed from Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*.

Text in the form of block capitals appears in almost all his paintings, alluding to the explanatory diagrams of science books and the bold type of comics. Individual works read as either an encyclopedic entry, index card, typological chart, diagram, or illustrated statement. Some tell complete stories using anecdotal evidence, bibliographic citations,

and scientific facts. In several works, all figuration has been dropped in favor of blocks of text, resembling the Ten Commandments or the Star Wars opening crawl—allowing us a peek at the unending monologue of the artist’s mind.

**Ken Grimes** is an American artist from Cheshire, Connecticut. Having been interested in extraterrestrial life from a young age, he has dedicated his long career to exploring alien and galactic symbols and imagery. In 2013 he received a Wynn Newhouse Award, and his work is in permanent collections at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the American Folk Art Museum, among others.

**Seth Shostak** is an astronomer from Arlington County, Virginia. Having been interested in space and the possibility of extraterrestrial life from a young age, he received degrees in physics and astrophysics at Princeton and California Institute of Technology. Shostak has contributed to four books, has spent a large portion of his career in public outreach and education, and now serves as a senior astronomer at the SETI Institute, the non-profit research institution dedicated to the study and understanding of life in the universe.

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**Editor’s note**

- “Outsider” refers to work produced by untrained artists, not academic or influenced by art-historical references, working outside the established art world or the conventional boundaries of official culture. Ken Grimes has resided for several decades in housing provided by Fellowship Place, an organization founded in 1960 to care for people with mental illness.