

Press release

a question of vibrancy/earthly sight

Natalie Ball, Khari Johnson-Ricks, Maria Maea, Azikiwe Mohammed, Devin N. Morris, Ambrose Rhapsody Murray, Elise Peterson, Adee Roberson, Khalif Tahir Thompson

Curated by Essence Harden

Dates | March 25 - May 21, 2022

Opening | Friday, March 25, 2022, 4:00 - 8:00 pm

Hours | Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 am - 1:30 pm / 2:30 - 7:00 pm

Eduardo Secci gallery is pleased to announce the group show “**a question of vibrancy/earthly sight**”, curated by **Essence Harden**, featuring works by **Natalie Ball, Khari Johnson-Ricks, Maria Maea, Azikiwe Mohammed, Devin N. Morris, Ambrose Rhapsody Murray, Elise Peterson, Adee Roberson**, and **Khalif Tahir Thompson**. The opening reception takes place on Friday, **March 25** (4:00 - 8:00 pm) in **Florence** (Piazza Goldoni 2), and the exhibition will be on view **until May 21, 2022**.

The exhibition “a question of vibrancy/earthly sight” is interested in a series of responses to the notion of place itself, working through what the cultural theorist Fred Moten names “the idea of the world”, which ushered in hierarchical positioning, binarist impulse, and a range of limited scopes which sought to punish and impale. Those failed visions of the world, especially Western and European, of dominance and overseeing are impositions of belonging and (rightful) place.

For this occasion, the curator Essence Harden questions: what of placelessness? What does this group of artists generate from the untenable? If “to see the earth is to see as earth,” then what is the radical potential in inhabitation, “the view from nowhere”? The group show does not assume that the artists of the African, Latinx, and Indigenous American diasporas are beholden to this realm of knowledge. Instead, it asks how these artists, in particular, inhabit and extend space as epiphenomenal - marking elasticity and expansion, topological matters, rather than order and hierarchy within the works.

The group show will present the responses of the nine artists through multiple sensory experiences.

Essence Harden is a visual arts curator and program manager at the California African American Museum (CAAM) and an independent arts writer who lives and works in Los Angeles. She graduated from the Department of African American Studies and is a PhD Candidate (ABD) in African Diaspora Studies at UC Berkeley. Essence Harden has curated several exhibitions in important museums and galleries: California African American Museum (CAAM), Los Angeles; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE); Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD), San Francisco; Oakland Museum of California; El Segundo Museum of Art (ESMoA), Antenna Gallery, New Orleans, among others. She is a 2018 recipient of The Creative Capital, Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant, and a 2020 Annenberg Innovation Lab Civic Media Fellow. She has also served as an art consultant for film and television.

Natalie Ball (1980, Portland, Oregon, United States) lives and works in Southern Oregon and Northern California. The artist’s practice includes installation art, performance, mixed media textile art, sculpture, painting, and printmaking. The work is rooted in her heritage as an Afro-Indigenous from the Modoc and Klamath Tribes and she uses materials and engages with narratives that point to ancestors. She seeks to complicate and broaden understandings of Indigenous culture, identity, and representation. Her work has been exhibited at museums and galleries, including Sadie Coles HQ, London (2021); Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2020); Berkeley Art Center (2020); Vancouver Art Gallery (2019); SculptureCenter, Queens, New York (2019); Gagosian, New York (2019); Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami (2018).

Khari Johnson-Ricks (1994, New Jersey, United States) lives and works in New Jersey. He is a multimedia artist, whose practice extends across painting, performance, murals, zines, and nightlife spaces. He especially creates intricate, exuberant scenes from paper constructions painted in shellac ink and watercolor. Exploring the illusory potential of paper, the works make use of the medium's graphic flatness to create two forms of depth. In situ, his tableaux appear like portals to dreamlike realms, while blank passages of paper bring the viewer back into the material plane of the work. The themes he explores range from family, to community, from friendship to life in general, taking inspiration also from vernacular movement traditions and martial art practices. His work has been included in exhibitions at Night Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); Catinca Tabacaru Gallery, New York (2020); Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles (2019).

Maria Maea (1988, Long Beach, California, United States) lives and works in Los Angeles. Her multidisciplinary practice includes working in production, installation and performance. The artist explores shadow and play through a range of meditative, durational, theatrical and actionist modes and using film, sculpture and movement she deepens her connection to the source. She investigates the ways we engage and view ourselves within the realities constructed for us and by us. As a Samoan-Mexican American, Maea straddles different layers of identity. Her work operates as illumination on the brown body's (dys)function as a capitalist commodity, as resistance to somatic fixity, an examination of the multiplicities of consciousness, and survival as immigrants and first-generation Americans. Her work has been presented in galleries and institutions: LaPau Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); Museum of Contemporary Art di Tucson (MOCA) (2021); Residency Art Gallery, Los Angeles (2019), among others.

Azikiwe Mohammed (1983, New York City, United States) lives and works in New York. His multidisciplinary practice, which merges painting, photography, sculpture, performance, and found ephemera, prioritizes, at its core, the experiences, needs, and subjectivity of people of color in Black people in America. The artist hopes to provide a service to Black people through his work, to create objects and experiences that allow them to be seen and to make space to listen. His work has been exhibited at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville (2021); Yeh Art Gallery at St. John's University, New York (2021); David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles (2020); SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah (2019); MoMA PS1, Queens, New York (2018); Antenna Gallery, New Orleans (2018); Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles (2017).

Devin N. Morris (1986, Baltimore, Maryland, United States) lives and works in New York. The artist is interested in abstracting American life and subverting traditional value systems through the exploration of the racial and sexual identity in mixed media paintings, photographs, writings and video. His work prioritizes displays of personal innocence and acts of kindness within surreal landscapes and elaborates draped environments that reimagine the social boundaries imposed on male interactions, platonic and otherwise. His work has been included in numerous exhibitions in museums and galleries, including Deli Gallery, New York (2021); Lyles & King, New York (2021); San Diego Art Institute, San Diego (2019); Hales Gallery, New York (2019); New Museum, New York (2018); Terrault Contemporary, Baltimore (2017); MoMA PS1, New York (2016).

Ambrose Rhapsody Murray (1996, Jacksonville, Florida, United States) lives and works between North Carolina and Florida. Sewing, painting, collage, and material experimentation making a home for Spirit and the mystical to reside has become the grounding force in their work. They especially currently practice on large scale textile collages with a process of exploration of our bodies and land as sites of historical memory and mystical/imaginative potential. Dedicated to the stories, lives, and bodies of Black girls, women and queer people, their practice is rooted in ethics of care, reverence, intimacy, time-travel, healing, grief and attending to the stories of the dead. Their work has been exhibited at the Nasher Museum of Art, Durham (2022); Fridman Gallery, New York (2021); Jeffrey Deitch, Miami (2021); Morán Morán Gallery, Mexico City (2021); Afro-American Cultural Center at Yale, New Haven (2017), among others.

Elise Peterson (1988, Washington D.C., United States) lives and works in Los Angeles. She is a multidisciplinary artist working in installation, sculpture, collage, recorded audio, and moving images. Her visual practice encapsulates intimate storied moments, void of linear timing, pasted against portals of fantasy while joining moments of internal and external existence. Socially, she aims to continue to use art as a platform for social justice while making art accessible for all through exhibitions of public work and beyond. The work has been exhibited in museums and galleries, including The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2019); Baxter St at the Camera Club of New York (2019); Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York (2018); Suite 7a, Sydney (2018). Public works have been presented at Central Park, New York; Manhattan Bridge, New York; Fort Gansevoort, New York; Baie-Saint-Paul, Québec; Orchard St. Mural, New York.

Adee Roberson (1981, West Palm Beach, Florida, United States) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles. Her work is a meditation on symbolism and texture, synthesizing performance and installation. She melds vibration and technicolor visions in the form of abstract painting, video, collage, sound, and soft sculpture. The works offer a refracted timeline of black diasporic movement, weaving sonic and familial archives, with landscape, rhythm, and spirit. This visual language is a way to process the viscerality of grief, celebration, trauma, and healing. Her work has been presented in numerous exhibition spaces, including UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles (2021); Palm Springs Art Museum (2019); Antenna Gallery, New Orleans (2018); Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans (2018); MOCA Los Angeles (2018); Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles (2017); Portland Institute of Contemporary Art (2016).

Khalif Tahir Thompson (1995, Brooklyn, New York, United States) lives and works in New York. His practice is focused on portraiture and figuration with subjects including family, friends, and cultural figures placed in constructed settings. The artist works with oil paint, incorporating mixed media, collage, and handmade paper to build the abstracted environments in which the characters exist. He believes painting can be a tool in considering the emotional, psychological complexity of an individual's story and identity. He creates imagery that connects one to the realm of another. Through altering perception and invoking empathy towards his subjects, he depicts their reality across a visceral lens. His work has been included in exhibitions and collections: The Grant Hill Collection, Orlando (2021); BUTTER Fine Art Fair, Indianapolis (2021); The Columbus Museum Permanent Collection (2020), among others.

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