

HAUSER & WIRTH

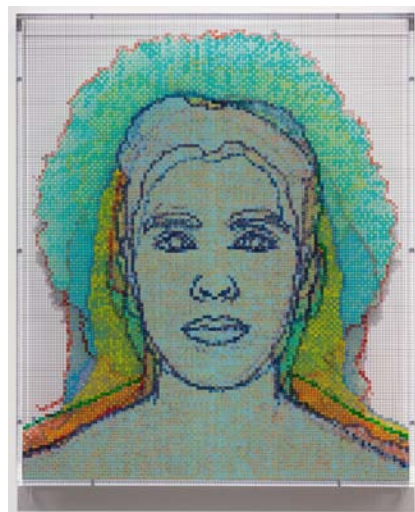
Press Release

Charles Gaines: Multiples of Nature, Trees and Faces

Hauser & Wirth London

29 January - 1 May 2021

Launches online from Friday 29 January 2021

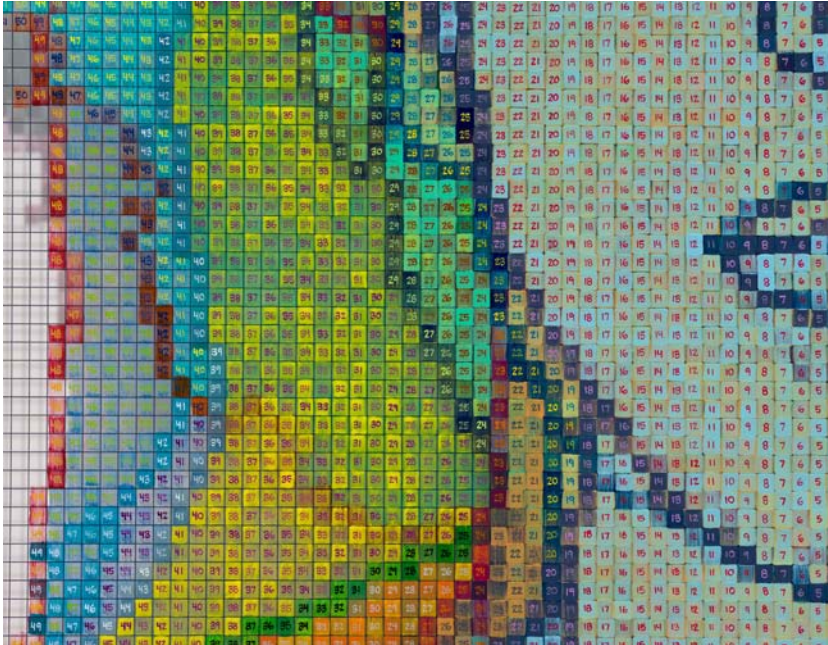


Launching online first, Charles Gaines will present his first ever solo exhibition in the UK featuring new works across both galleries at Hauser & Wirth London. Comprising two new bodies of Gaines' critically acclaimed Plexiglas gridworks, the show includes his institutionally heralded 'Numbers and Trees' and 'Numbers and Faces' series. With this exhibition, Gaines continues to engage formulas and systems that interrogate relationships between the objective and the subjective realms, as well as navigating ideas around identity and diversity. Gaines' distinctive and generative approach forges a critical link between first generation American conceptualists and subsequent generations of artists who are pushing the limits of conceptualism today.

The newest chapter in Gaines' long-established practice comes in the form of 'Numbers and Faces: Multi-Racial/Ethnic Combinations Series 1', a continuation of the 'Faces' series that Gaines began in 1978. In this newest series, Gaines creates an amalgam of faces within one artwork and seeks to interrogate ideas of representation, and more specifically the political and cultural ideas that shape one's understanding of the concept of multi-racial identity. In preparing for this work, Gaines searched for people who self-identified as multi-racial or multi-ethnic and invited them to be part of the work. Gaines states, 'I believe that the system of mapping these faces over a series can, itself, become meaningful by being drawn into an analogy with certain concepts of human reproduction such as heredity, genealogy, descent, lineage, genetics, etc., concepts that exist within the same domain. One of the main issues that interests me in working with systems is that, at a certain point, its relationship to any idea is arbitrary.'

Each face depicted in this new series is assigned two colours: one for the contour lines of the face and the other for the space in between the contour lines. The faces are sequentially mapped out and overlaid one-by-one over the course of the series. According to Gaines, 'When the image is overlaid, the colours of the faces merge in areas and remain unaltered in other areas; over the course of the series the merging of contours produces

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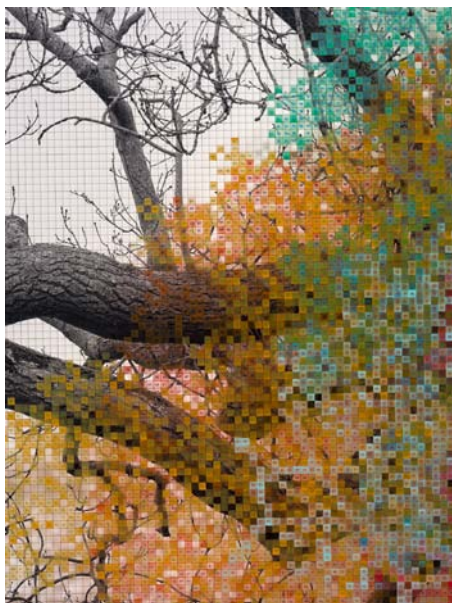
different patterns and colour effects that dynamically and formally play out a binary relationship; the generalized structure of a face and the differences between faces.' Formal black and white photographs of each successive sitter appear on the back panel of each work. The concept of identity politics has played a central role within Gaines' oeuvre, and the radical approach he employs addresses issues of race in ways that transcend the limits of representation.

In both series on view, Gaines applies a shared system of rules. 'Numbers and Trees: London Series 1' provides a new format of Gaines' celebrated 'Numbers and Trees' Plexiglas series, which began in 1986 and continues to evolve. The image of the tree has been central to Charles Gaines' work since the mid-1970s and his methodical examination of their form is continued in the newest iteration. These newest works are larger in scale than previous counterparts and are inspired by the vast English trees Gaines examined and photographed during a visit to Melbury in Dorset in early 2020. Gaines explored a number of iconic English gardens and forests before settling on Dorset as his site for the newest series, having noticed the immense width of the trees that would translate perfectly to the increased scale in which he wanted to work.

Gaines plots each London tree by assigning it a distinctive colour and a numbered grid that reflects the full form of the tree depicted in the detail photograph on the back panel of the work. Each successive work is realised by overlaying the forms of trees one at a time and in progression, following Gaines' systematic sequencing process. These works call into question both the objective nature of the trees within them, and the subjective natural and material human actions that surround them. Gaines reflects on his process, 'As I watch the systems and works evolve, and images being produced, I'm totally reminded that what I'm seeing is not a product of my intention but is a product of a system, and the system has a completely arbitrary relationship with the object that's being represented'.

Charles Gaines is a leading practitioner of conceptualism and influential educator at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), Los Angeles, having just launched a scholarship to promote diversity in the renowned M.F.A. Art Programme. Gaines will have a solo exhibition entitled 'New Work: Charles Gaines' at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) from 6 March – 6 September 2021 as well as a survey exhibition at Dia Beacon, New York, opening 12 February 2021. Within the frame of Hauser & Wirth's education programme partnership with South London Gallery, the next school workshop will be focused around the Charles Gaines exhibition.

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About the artist

Charles Gaines (b. 1944, Charleston SC) lives and works in Los Angeles and has been a member of the CalArts School of Art faculty since 1989, where he recently established a fellowship to provide critical scholarship support for Black students in the M.F.A Art programme. Gaines has been the subject of numerous exhibitions in the United States and around the world, most notably a mid-career survey at the Pomona College Museum of Art and the Pitzer College Art Gallery in Claremont CA, as well as a museum survey of his Gridwork at The Studio Museum, Harlem NY, and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles CA.

Gaines' work is included in prominent public collections such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY; The Studio Museum, Harlem NY; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago IL; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco CA; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, Germany; Galerie der Stadt Esslingen, Esslingen, Germany; Villa Merkel, Esslingen, Germany; and Lentos Museum, Linz, Austria. His work has also been presented at the 1975 Whitney Biennial and the Venice Biennale in 2007 and 2015. In addition to his artistic practice, Gaines has published several essays on contemporary art, including 'Theater of Refusal: Black Art and Mainstream Criticism' (University of California, Irvine, 1993) and 'The New Cosmopolitanism' (California State University, Fullerton, 2008). In 2019, Gaines received the 60th Edward MacDowell Medal.

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The gallery is currently closed, please
visit the website for reopening details
following the UK national lockdown

www.hauserwirth.com

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Charles Gaines in his Los Angeles studio, 2020

Numbers and Faces: Multi-Racial/Ethnic
Combinations Series 1: Face #11, Martina Crouch
(Nigerian Igbo Tribe/White)
2020
Acrylic paint, acrylic sheet and photograph
96.5 x 81.3 x 8.9 cm / 38 x 32 x 3 1/2 inches

Numbers and Faces: Multi-Racial/Ethnic
Combinations Series 1, Face #11, Martina Crouch
(Nigerian Igbo Tribe/White) (detail)
2020
Acrylic paint, acrylic sheet and photograph
96.5 x 81.3 x 8.9 cm / 38 x 32 x 3 1/2 inches

Numbers and Trees: London Series 1, Tree #6, Fetter
Lane (detail)
2020
Acrylic sheet, acrylic paint, photograph
162.2 x 223.5 x 14.6 cm / 63 7/8 x 88 x 5 3/4 inches