

SEANKELLY



NXTHVN

Undercurrents

June 10 – August 5, 2022

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 9, 6-8pm

Curatorial Walkthrough: Saturday, June 11, 11:30am – 1pm

Sean Kelly and NXTHVN are delighted to present *Undercurrents* a group exhibition that explores the nuanced relationship between materiality, human longing, and collective memory. This culminating exhibition will feature artists from NXTHVN's Cohort 03 Fellowship Program; **Layo Bright, John Guzman, Alyssa Klauer, Africanus Okokon, Patrick Quarm, Daniel Ramos, and Warith Taha**, it is organized by Curatorial Fellows **Marissa Del Toro** and **Jamillah Hinson**. There will be an opening reception on June 9 from 6-8pm, the artists and curators will be present. On Saturday, June 11 from 11:30am – 1pm there will be a walk-through of the exhibition led by curatorial fellows Marissa Del Toro and Jamillah Hinson.

Featuring a range of media including painting, sculpture, video and photography, the Cohort 03 artists reveal the present undercurrents of poignant topics within the contemporary moment, including investigations of how familial legacies and lineages, cultural hybridity, and collective memory shape personal experience. Through the examination of their material processes, *Undercurrents* presents notions surrounding transformation and the many ways in which human longing is manifest. Using ubiquitous materials alongside exploratory techniques, the artists layer and mold their media to give visibility to nuanced, depth-filled narratives. This exhibition positions the artists in intimate conversation with one another while examining both the intricacy and range of their practices.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Layo Bright is a Nigerian sculptor whose works explore themes of migration, inheritance, legacy and identity through portraits, textiles and mixed media. In *Double Standard*, Bright contrasts quotidian plastic checkered bags, which are often linked with migrants around the world, with crushed glass, addressing overlooked histories and notions of class. By fusing these materials, she considers suppressed histories and the inevitability of migration in the current global climate. In her *Visions* series, the artist merges visages with foliage, taking inspiration from the natural environment and ancestry to create sculptural works that examine notions of nurture and legacy. Made from glass, these forms mirror fragile, yet complex relationships connected to colonial histories.

John Guzman's large-scale oil paintings deconstruct the body, hands, feet, knees, and teeth as a way to explore unfamiliar possibilities of the human form and interpret the unpredictable, unusual, and at times unbearable moments of life. In *Purge* he reveals an aggressive fight scene with swirls of black bold lines accentuating the gnarled body parts of hands, feet and a nose enmeshed together. John reveals the visceral transformations the body may take by reducing it to textured lines and muted colors.

Alyssa Klauer's dreamlike works feature layers of saturated yet transparent paint, intuitively combined to create a ghostly, iridescent luminosity. Through her varied techniques of splattering, dying, and stenciling, Klauer mediates on "Queer time" the idea that Queer individuals often experience a delayed or second adolescence when encountering time-bending experiences such as coming out later in life. In *Allegory of Painting* and other works, this narrative emerges through colors evocative of DIY tie-dye, smoky, sky-written foliage, and swirling sparkles reminiscent of fairy tales. This magic envelops the figures and distorts them within the disembodied, surrealist non-spaces they inhabit.

Africanus Okokon works with the moving image, performance, painting, assemblage, collage, sound, and installation to explore the dialectics of forgetting and remembrance in relation to culture—as well as shared and personal mediated histories. As in his films, the content depicted in the labored surfaces of Okokon's paintings are appropriated both from private and public media — borrowing from family photo albums, home movies, advertisement, and cinema to create an image of time that hovers between abstraction and representation. His interdisciplinary practice deals with loss, the assumed truth of the recorded document and the moral function of memory.

Patrick Quarm is a Ghanaian painter who employs a juxtaposition of traditional Western-style painting with politically charged African print fabrics as a metaphor to engage dialogues of cultural hybridity. His works in *Undercurrents* were created through processes of layering, cutting, and erasing, characterizing his paintings with a visual topography that references the merging point of multiple cultures and how

SEANKELLY

identity and the body transform across time and space.

Daniel Ramos centers the people in his life—working-class and immigrant family, friends, coworkers—as the subjects of his work. He uses photography as a vehicle to amplify their presence in the world and has recently begun incorporating his photography into three-dimensional sculptures, large-scale collages and mixed media installations; in *Faith And Fate Go Hand In Hand* and *Memories Of An Artist As A Young Man*, Ramos combines his own photographs, family heirlooms, memorabilia and archives and places them directly on or among discarded doors and porch awnings, which are taken from his family home in Monterrey, Mexico. By revealing his own history, Ramos aims to remind his viewer that the natural world is free from politics, and if we preserve our own legacy, we have control of our history.

Warith Taha's practice draws from a diverse field of research ranging from the aesthetics of visual abstraction, self-portraiture and autobiography to 90's *Black Inches* magazines, found family photos and domestic objects. These points of interest become anchors in an ongoing autobiographical exploration that often touches on his relationship to American history, race, gender, sexuality, and class. His works carry a significant sense of care and consideration towards the minutiae of everyday life moments and objects, especially those overlooked such as pennies, rainbows, and rain droplets. He uplifts and foregrounds the value of these objects by coalescing them into a collective whole where their presence is undeniable.

ABOUT NXTHVN

NXTHVN is a groundbreaking institution that combines the best of arts and entrepreneurship. Through access, education, programming, and impact investing, NXTHVN launches the careers of artists and curators and strengthens the livelihood of its local community. Located in the historically African-American Dixwell neighborhood of New Haven, CT, the expansive adapted-reuse campus houses gallery, studio, office, performance and living spaces. Cornerstone programs include a renowned fellowship to educate and accelerate emerging and underrepresented artists, paid arts apprenticeships for local teens and business incubation to nurture cultural and capital value in the neighborhood. Co-founded in 2018 by acclaimed visual artist Titus Kaphar and private equity investor Jason Price—both longtime residents of New Haven—NXTHVN represents a new national arts model for developing an equitable society.

For additional information on NXTHVN please visit nxthvn.com

For information on the exhibition please visit skny.com

For press inquiries please contact Adair Lentini at Adair@skny.com

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Image caption: *2021-22 Fellows Cohort 03* Photo by John Dennis Courtesy of NXTHVN