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Gagosian to Exhibit New Works by Theaster Gates in New York



Theaster Gates, *Chief Vestment in Red and Yellow*, 2022 (detail), industrial oil-based enamel, rubber torch down, bitumen, wood, and copper, 84 × 84 inches (213.4 × 213.4 cm) © Theaster Gates

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May your love be the vestment of my sorrows and the garment of our profound joy.

—Theaster Gates

NEW YORK, November 7, 2022—Gagosian is pleased to announce *Vestment*, an exhibition of new works by Theaster Gates at 976 Madison Avenue, New York.

Vestment, a new series of tar paintings or “torch works” by Gates, continues the artist’s ongoing engagement with formalism and mark making at the scale of the roof. In this suite of paintings and a sculpture, Gates diverges from earlier monochromatic torch works and experiments with color as a formal device for exploring spiritual and stylistic hierarchies, religious garments and aggrandizement, and the symbolism and universalism of nationhood.

The new tar paintings serve as a distillate of some of the key intellectual musings with which Gates has grappled over the past year and throughout his practice. Invoking his recent meditations on the legacies of Russian Suprematism and Constructivism, along with the technical restraint and conceptual rigor of artists such as Josef Albers and Agnes Martin, Gates considers the cross as a politically galvanizing device and motif of religious social form. The ubiquity and iconography of the cross responds to the priestly vestments present throughout Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Andrei*

Rublev (1966)—a seminal film that anchors Gates’s artistic study of the late scholar Robert Bird’s archive of Russian film, philosophy, and literature. *Andrei Rublev*, in this way, serves as a gateway for further investigations of ritual, sacred acts, ranking, and symbolism.

From clay to tar, the ritual of fire and the alchemical power of the flame is a fundamental axis for Gates in his practice. Through the torch, Gates challenges us to reconsider the stylistic grading of humble materials and labor-based practices. Paying homage to his father’s craft as a roofer, Gates honors the lineage of knowledge and transference of this skill while demonstrating the malleability, vulnerability, and precarity of the form. These new torch works extend the artist’s interest in preserving, celebrating, and elevating near-obsolete processes into and within the art historical canon. Through the dynamism of this practice, Gates remains conversant with these labor traditions.

Vestment coincides with *Young Lords and Their Traces*, the artist’s first museum survey, at the New Museum, New York, from November 10, 2022, through February 5, 2023. As an adjacent project, Gates has curated *The Trace*, a slate of films that begin to lay out the origins of Russian engagement with Black American labor movements through cinematic relationships. This series, which will run from November 16 to November 27, 2022, is copresented by Gagosian and Metrograph as a complement to *Vestment* and the New Museum exhibition.

Theaster Gates was born in 1973 in Chicago, where he lives and works. Public collections include Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Kunstmuseum Basel; Pinault Collection, Venice; and Tate, London. Solo museum exhibitions and projects include *An Epitaph for Civil Rights*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2011–12); *Processions*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (2016–19); *True Value*, Fondazione Prada, Milan (2016); *Black Archive*, Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria (2016); *How to Build a House Museum*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2016); *The Minor Arts*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2017); *Black Madonna*, Kunstmuseum Basel (2018, traveled to Sprengel Museum Hannover, Germany); *Black Image Corporation*, Osservatorio Fondazione Prada, Milan (2018–19, traveled to Gropius Bau, Berlin, 2019); *Amalgam*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2019, traveled to Tate Liverpool, England, 2019–20); *Assembly Hall*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2019); *Black Chapel*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2019–20); *Slight Intervention #5*, Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2021–22); and *A Clay Sermon*, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2021–22). In 2022, he designed *Black Chapel* for the Serpentine Pavilion in London. He participated in the Whitney Biennial, New York (2010); Documenta 13, Kassel, Germany (2012); the 56th Biennale di Venezia (2015); and the Chicago Architecture Biennial (2015 and 2019).

Gates is the founder and executive director of Rebuild Foundation, a nonprofit platform for art, cultural development, and neighborhood transformation that supports artists and strengthens communities through free arts programming and innovative cultural amenities on Chicago’s South Side. He is a professor in the Department of Visual Arts and serves as the Special Advisor to the President for Arts Initiatives at the University of Chicago. Gates is the recipient of international honors including the Artes Mundi Prize (2015), the Kurt Schwitters Prize (2017), the Nasher Prize (2018), the Crystal Award (2020), and the Frederick Kiesler Award for Architecture and the Arts (2022).

#TheasterGates

THEASTER GATES

Vestment

Opening reception: Saturday, November 12, 6–8pm

November 12–December 23, 2022

976 Madison Avenue, New York

Press

Gagosian

press@gagosian.com

Hallie Freer

hfreer@gagosian.com

+1 212 744 2313

Polskin Arts

Meagan Jones

meagan.jones@finnpartners.com

+1 212 593 6485

Julia Esposito

julia.esposito@finnpartners.com

+1 212 715 1643