

SpaceRace

Curated by Dexter Wimberly

January 17 – March 2, 2024

London



Nicholas Hlobo, *Uvathel'umsitho*, 2023 (detail)

Lehmann Maupin presents *SpaceRace*, an exhibition curated by **Dexter Wimberly**, that gathers five artists whose work is informed by a masterful understanding of pattern, materiality, and symbology: Leonardo Benzant, McArthur Binion, Alteronce Gumby, Nicholas Hlobo, and Brittney Leeanne Williams.

The works on view, which include painting, sculpture, and mixed media, use light, color, and unexpected source materials to prompt us to contemplate our place in the universe, explore ideas of spirituality, and engage with varied perceptions of reality. In this context, the term *SpaceRace* has a dual meaning. It is a reference to the 20th-century competition between two Cold War rivals (the United States and the Soviet Union), who sought dominance in space beyond our planet. It is also a satirical reference to the commodification of Black art in the 21st century.

Leonardo Benzant creates structures that reflect multiple patterns and chance-operations that suggest the influence of spiritual forces behind the work and its ideas. Aesthetic principles like improvisation, polyrhythm and “call and response,” express themselves in the materiality of his work. Working with materials such as fiber, textile, and beads, Benzant transforms them into artistic expressions beyond the Western canon. Each bead, each strand, each form wrapped and bound, pulls from traditional African healing and spiritual practices.

Alteronce Gumby’s vivid interstellar paintings emerge from his profound fascination with the cosmos and theories of energy. His prismatic fields add new perspectives to the history of abstract painting by proposing deliberate connections between color, society and the universe. Alteronce’s desire to interpret unknown territory is enhanced by his query into how societal conditions impact life on our planet. His practice serves as a portal into untouched worlds. It is in this context that Alteronce develops his extraterrestrial vistas.

McArthur Binion creates highly personal and labor-intensive works that assert his unique position between minimalism, identity politics, and abstraction. Binion employs elemental materials such as oil stick, ink, and graphite to create a dense interlacing grid on the surface of his paintings. This hand-made geometry is applied to a ground layer of neatly tiled images—reproductions of personal photos and documents—that offer glimpses into the artist’s life: his birth certificate from Mississippi, the farm house where he was born, a passport-sized self-portrait, or an address book capturing his formative years

in New York City. Highly influenced by poetry and bebop jazz, Binion swings between improvisation and order, abstraction and biography. His works refuse easy categorization, continuously shifting between a critique and an acceptance of the minimalist aesthetic, ultimately rooting the works in an individual dedication to the process of painting.

Nicholas Hlobo is known for creating hybrid objects, intricately weaving ribbon and leather into crisply primed canvas alongside wood and rubber detritus. Each material holds charged associations with cultural, gendered, sexual and national identity, creating a complex visual narrative that references ideas around post apartheid nationhood and bodily healing. Using the metaphor of himself as a surgeon, Hlobo treats the canvas like a physical being, ready to be cut open and sewn up at his discretion. Guided by the subconscious, Hlobo allows the kaleidoscopic gradients of paint to conjure abstract figurative renderings on the canvas.

Brittney Leeanne Williams focuses on the body as the primary subject of her pictorial investigations. Her works depict human-like forms in a state of transformation, with bodies contorted and shaped in unusual ways—figures entangled in draperies, all subject to unseen pressures or forces that extend beyond the visible. These figures twist and knot themselves into emotional compositions, enduring complex physical maneuvers to the extent that bodies, skies and landscapes merge into a transcendent fusion, where corporeal presence blends with the intangible. With a rich and deep color palette, Williams infuses an interplay between the seen and the unseen, echoing the delicate balance between the presence and absence of the body on the canvas.

Leonardo Benzant (b. 1972, Brooklyn, NY) is an artist who bridges the spiritual and the material realities of the African diaspora. In his multidisciplinary practice he is most known for his expressive painting and his elaborate beaded sculptures. Born and raised in Brooklyn he is Dominican-American with Haitian heritage. His practice is informed by his studies and initiations of Kongo and Yoruba origin. He deploys a wide variety of media and found objects to create work that connect African and Caribbean religion, art, history, culture, rituals and modern and contemporary art. He attended Pratt Institute in NY. Benzant was awarded the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painters and Sculptors and the Galveston Artist Residency in Texas. He was a finalist for The Burke Prize at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City. His work has been exhibited at the Taubman Museum in Roanoke, Virginia, the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco, California, Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Benzant's work is included in several important private and public collections including the Weisman Museum (MN), Minneapolis Institute of Art (MN), The Bunker Artspace (FL), the Harvey B. Gantt Center (NC), The Wedge Collection (Canada), the Peggy Cooper Cafritz collection (DC), and the U.S. Embassy (Chad). He has participated in Untitled, Expo Chicago, Volta and Pulse Contemporary art fairs. He presented his first solo gallery exhibition at Claire Oliver gallery in New York City, titled, *Across Seven Ruins & Redemptions_Somo Kamarioka*.

McArthur Binion (b. 1946, Macon, MS; lives and works in Chicago, IL) combines collage, drawing, and painting to create autobiographical abstractions of painted minimalist patterns over an "under surface" of personal documents and photographs. From photocopies of his birth certificate and pages from his address book, to pictures from his childhood and found photographs of lynchings, the poignant and charged images that constitute the tiled base of his work are concealed and abstracted by grids of oil stick. The complexly layered works, from a distance, appear to be monochromatic minimalist abstractions that have led many to compare his work to that of Jasper Johns, Robert Ryman, or Brice Marden. However, while his contemporaries focused more on materiality, abstraction, and in some cases the social and political climate of the time, Binion's works are intensely personal and deeply dedicated to the rigorous process of making a painting. Upon closer inspection, these monochromatic abstractions come into focus: the perfect grid becomes a series of imperfect laboriously hand-

drawn lines, behind which emerge intimate details of Binion's identity and personal history. Binion's gridded compositions impose rational order to the layers of personal history, allowing only fragments of information from his birth certificate to be read, or details of his mother's face to be identified—but never enough to be immediately legible. Having begun his career as a writer, Binion is highly influenced by language and music, as can be seen in his titles and the ways in which he layers information to be "read" rather than simply seen. The tension that exists between the grid and the artist's visible gestures is not unlike that of jazz music, which merges improvisation with the order of a musical composition.

Binion received his B.F.A. from Wayne State University, Detroit, MI in 1971 and his M.F.A. from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI in 1973. Select recent solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at Library Street Collective, Detroit, MI (2023); Museo Novecento, Florence, Italy (2020); the Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI (2018); Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, TX (2012); and the University of Maryland University College Gallery, Adelphi, MD (2010). Recent group exhibitions featuring his work include *Black Abstractionists: From Then 'til Now*, Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX (2022); *Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami's Collection*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL (2022); *Black Refractions: Highlights from The Studio Museum in Harlem*, Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA (2019), traveled to Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, SC (2019), Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, MI (2019), Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA (2020); Frye Museum of Art, Seattle, WA (2020); and Utah Museum of Fine Art, Salt Lake City, UT (2020); *Beyond Infinity: Contemporary Art After Kusama*, Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, Boston, MA (2019); *Expanding Narratives: The Figure and the Ground*, Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (2018); *Something to Say: The McNay Presents 100 Years of African American Art*, McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX (2018); *Picturing Mississippi, 1817-2017: Land of Plenty, Pain, and Promise*, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MI (2017); *Dimensions of Black: a Collaboration with the San Diego African American Museum of Fine Art*, Museum of Contemporary San Diego, San Diego, CA (2017); *New at NOMA: Recent Acquisitions in Modern and Contemporary Art*, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA (2017); *Through the African American Lens*, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C. (2017); *Circa 1970*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2016); *Prospect.3: Notes for Now*, New Orleans,

LA (2014); *When the Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination in the American South*, Studio Museum, Harlem, NY (2014); and *Black in the Abstract*, Contemporary Art Museum Houston, TX (2013). Binion's works were also featured prominently in the 57th Venice Biennale, *VIVA ARTE VIVA* (2017).

Binion's work is in numerous public and private collections including the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA; Alford Collection of Contemporary Art at Rollins College, Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Winter Park, FL; Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH; Ariel Mutual Funds, Chicago, IL; Art Bridges Foundation, Bentonville, AR; Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan, Detroit, MI; Children's Hospital of Michigan, Detroit, MI; City of Detroit, Detroit, MI; Cook County Hospital, Chicago, MI; Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, MI; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO; De Paul Art Museum, Chicago, IL; Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI; Fidelity Investments Art Collection; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Joyner Giuffrida Collection; Kemper Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO; McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS; Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA; Mott Warsh Collection, Flint, MI; Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, FL; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; Phillips Collection, Washington, DC; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), San Francisco, CA; Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, DC; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Strauss Family Collection, Santa Fe, CA; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH; Wayne State University, Detroit, MI and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

Alteronce Gumby (b. 1985, Harrisburg, PA) is an artist and local of New York City. His artistic practice includes painting, ceramics, installation and performance. Gumby's work has been exhibited at galleries such as Hauser & Wirth, Gladstone Gallery and Camden Arts Centre. In his recent exhibition *Cross Colours* at Bode Projects in Berlin, the power of complementary colours is presented in works that reference colour exercises in Joseph Albert's *Interaction of Colour*. Through Gumby's fluorescent and chromatic spectrum of iridescent colour, the artist engages the viewer and expands the notions through which we perceive form and colour, the subjectivity on identity, the materiality on earth, and in cosmic space.

Gumby graduated from the Yale School of Art with an MFA in Painting and Printmaking in 2016. He has won notable awards such as the Austrian American Foundation/ Seebacher Prize for Fine Arts and the Robert Reed Memorial Scholarship. Gumby has also participated in numerous international artist residencies such as the Rauschenberg Residency (2019), London Summer Intensive (2016), Summer Academy in Salzburg, Austria (2015), 6Base (2016), and as the 2016 recipient of the Harriet Hale Woolley Scholarship at the Fondation des États-Unis in Paris.

Nicholas Hlobo (b. 1975, Cape Town, South Africa; lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa) began his career around the end of apartheid in 1994, when there was a new sense of freedom and national pride in South Africa. With the eradication of legalized and enforced discrimination and segregation, Hlobo and his peers were empowered to openly voice their opinions and ideas under the protection of new laws, and Hlobo's subtle commentary on the democratic realities of his home country and concerns with the changing international discourse of art formed a foundational tenet of his practice. Hlobo uses metaphorically charged materials such as ribbon, leather, wood, and rubber detritus, which he melds and weaves together to create two- and three-dimensional hybrid objects that are intricate and seductively tactile. Each material holds a particular association with cultural, gendered, sexual, or ethnic identities, and the works form complex visual narratives that reflect the various dichotomies present within the artist's home country, as well as those that exist around the world. The results are highly evocative, and the artist combines anthropomorphic imagery with cultural symbols and traditions to create amalgamated forms that feel at once familiar, alien, and ancient. At its core, Hlobo's practice engages themes of self-discovery and explores the intersections of race, gender, and cultural and sexual identity within the context of his South African heritage.

Hlobo received a fine art degree from Johannesburg's Technikon Witwatersrand in 2002. Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at the Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Israel (2021); Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2019); The Maitland Institute, Cape Town, South Africa (2018); Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art, Cape Town, South Africa (2017); Uppsala Art Museum, Uppsala, Sweden (2017); Museum Beelden aan Zee, The Hague, the Netherlands (2016); Locust Projects, Miami, FL (2013); National Museum of Art, Architecture, and Design, Oslo, Norway (2011); Savannah College of Art and Design, Lacoste, France (2010);

Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2008); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2008); and Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Savannah, GA (2007). Recent group exhibitions featuring his work include *Allied with Power: African and African Diaspora Art from the Jorge M. Pérez Collection*, Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL (2020); *Alpha Crucis*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway (2020); *In the Spotlight of the Night - Life in the Gloom*, Marta Herford Museum for Art, Architecture, Design, Herford, Germany (2019); *Kiss My Genders*, Hayward Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2019); *Queer Abstraction*, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA; Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Overland Park, KS (2019); *Material Insanity*, Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL), Marrakesh, Morocco (2019); *Face to Face: From Yesterday to Today, Non-Western Art and Picasso*, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada (2018); *After the Thrill is Gone: Fashion, Politics, and Culture in Contemporary South African Art*, The Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA (2018); *Art/Afrique, le nouvel atelier*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France (2017); *Energy and Process*, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2016); *The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Purgatory and Hell Revisited by Contemporary African Artists*, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2014), and Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C. (2015); *A History (art architecture design, from the 80s to now)*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2015); *Intense Proximity*, La Triennale 2012, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2012); and *Flow*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY (2008). Hlobo has participated in multiple biennials including the 11th Liverpool Biennial (2021); the 18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2012); the 54th Venice Biennale (2011); the 6th Liverpool Biennial (2010); and the 3rd Guangzhou Triennial, China (2008).

His work is included in numerous international public and private collections, including the Arquipelago – Centro de Artes Contemporaneas, Azores, Portugal; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, Port Elizabeth, South Africa; Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa; Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) Museum of Art, Savannah, GA; South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa; Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom; Unisa – University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa; and the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art, Cape Town, South Africa.

Hlobo has received several honors and distinctions such as the Villa Extraordinary Award for Sculpture, The Claire & Edoardo Villa Will Trust, Midrand, South Africa (2016); Rolex Visual Arts Protégé (2010-11); Standard Bank Young Artist Award, Standard Bank of South Africa (2009); and the Tollman Award for Visual Art (2006).

Brittney Leeanne Williams (b. 1990, Pasadena, CA) transforms Southern California vistas into what she calls “emotional landscapes: representations of psychological states, memories, and emotional ties,” often staging a red, bent figure in tableaux where the natural world and architecture blend and reflect each other. Williams’ female forms become conduits for her exploration of feminine and Black identities.

Williams’s work has been exhibited at Alexander Berggruen, New York, NY; The Hole, New York, NY; Zevitas Marcus, Los Angeles, CA; Monique Meloche, Chicago, IL; Mamoth, London, UK; Carl Kostyál, Milan, IT and Stockholm, SE; Para Site, Hong Kong, CN; Galerie Droste, Paris, FR; Savvy Contemporary, Berlin, GE; Newchild, Antwerp, BE; Collaborations, Copenhagen, DK; and at institutions such as MoAD, San Francisco, CA; and Telfair Museums, Savannah, GA; among others. Her work is included in various public collections, including the Columbus Museum, Columbus, GA; the Domus Collection, New York, NY and Beijing, CN; Fundacion Medianoche0, Granada, ES; and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX. She is a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant recipient. Williams’ artist residencies include Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture; the Fores Project, UK; Arts + Public Life; and McColl Center.

Dexter Wimberly is an American curator based in Japan who has organized exhibitions in galleries and institutions around the world including the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City; The Green Family Art Foundation in Dallas, Texas; The Harvey B. Gantt Center in Charlotte, North Carolina; KOKI Arts in Tokyo, Japan; BODE in Berlin, Germany; and The Third Line in Dubai, UAE. His exhibitions have been reviewed and featured in publications including The New York Times and Artforum; and have received support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and The Kinkade Family Foundation. Wimberly is a Senior Critic at New York Academy of Art, and the founder and director of the Hayama Artist Residency in Japan. He is also the co-founder and CEO of the online education platform, CreativeStudy.

**LEHMANN MAUPIN**

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since Inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity, and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.

LONDON

1 Cromwell Place
South Kensington, SW7 2JE
London, UK
44 20 8057 1880

CONTACT

Adriana Elgarresta, Global Director of Public Relations
adriana@lehmannmaupin.com

Alejandro Jassan, Associate Director of Press Relations
alejandro@lehmannmaupin.com

General Inquiries
london@lehmannmaupin.com