

Tau Lewis *Spirit Level*

February 13–March 29, 2025
616 N Western Avenue, Los Angeles



Tau Lewis, *The Night Woman*, 2024 (detail). © Tau Lewis. Courtesy the artist

David Zwirner is pleased to announce *Spirit Level*, a solo exhibition of work by Tau Lewis (b. 1993) at the gallery's 616 N Western Avenue location in Los Angeles. Employing various sculptural techniques, Lewis creates colorful, totemic forms that suggest mythical territories beyond our own. In the conception of these anthropomorphic figures, the artist develops respective identities and narratives in an intermediary world that implicates our ancestral pasts, spiritual and cultural similitudes, and multiplanar existences. *Spirit Level* focuses on five monumental sculptures and a circular quilt, all created from salvaged textiles and other found materials, that were first realized for Lewis's 2024–2025 solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, curated by Jeffrey De Blois.

Inspired by a range of sources including the many faces of the Caribbean Sea, techno and dub music, novels, and studies of religion and spirituality, among other subjects, Lewis expands her narrative and world-building possibilities. These figures, some of whom appear in other guises throughout Lewis's various bodies of work, populate the artist's domain with not only their presence and associated fables but also with what she terms their "material DNA," the genetic thread that binds them together. The works in *Spirit Level* originated in the wake of a major loss experienced by the artist. The forms embody Lewis processing a significant life transition, in which she refigures and repurposes material and emotional inheritances. Through the act of synthesizing found and inherited belongings, she reckons with the ending of an object's journey as it changes hands, the mysterious space in between these transitions, and its reemergence in a new form.

Bringing together myriad voices in their construction, the stately sculptures are placed in the airy environs of the Los Angeles gallery, where they seem to spiritually confer with one another in majestic

repose. The five colossal figures gather in ceremony around a circular quilt titled *The Last Transmission* (2024). With its radial symmetry, *The Last Transmission* appears as a taxonomic organization of an alternative universe—or a mandala or a sacred geometric portal that serves as a locus for prayer and meditation. The work's title, too, links all of Lewis's subjects to a sweeping "last transmission," in which the lives of those who have passed continue to return and transform in an infinite echo. In the quilt, Lewis intuitively maps out the constituent parts of a larger representation of grief, finding deep harmony amid chaos.

Tying back to the themes omnipresent in Lewis's work, the meanings of the exhibition title, *Spirit Level*, are manifold. A spirit level is an instrument used to measure how parallel or perpendicular a surface is relative to the ground; here, Lewis also invokes the imagery of encountering other spiritual realms, traversing alternative "levels" of existence, in addition to the concept of "leveling"—the grounding, calming, and harmonizing of one's spirit.

Born in Toronto in 1993, Tau Lewis is an artist who lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Lewis has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions worldwide. In 2024–2025, she presented *Spirit Level* at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. In 2024, the Polygon Gallery, Vancouver, unveiled the artist's outdoor installation *Coloratura*, which will be on view through March 30, 2025. Lewis was awarded the fourth Ezratti Family Prize for Sculpture by the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, in November 2023, which was accompanied by a solo exhibition at the museum. *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*, curated by Ebony L. Haynes, was presented at 52 Walker, New York, in 2022. The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, organized *Tau Lewis: Symphony* in 2021. Other solo presentations have been held at venues including Oakville Galleries, Ontario (2020); the Hepworth Wakefield, Yorkshire, United Kingdom (2019); Kenderdine Art Gallery of the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada (2019); the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, Ontario, Canada (2018); and Atlanta Contemporary (2018).

In 2024, the artist's work was shown in *Color Is the First Revelation of the World* at the Orange County Museum of Art, Costa Mesa, California, and *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art* at the Barbican, London. Lewis was included in the 2022 Venice Biennale exhibition *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani. The Public Art Fund also commissioned work by the artist that was included in the 2022 group presentation *Black Atlantic* at Brooklyn Bridge Park, New York. Lewis has also participated in group exhibitions presented by the Shah Garg Foundation, New York (2023); Lafayette Anticipations, Paris (2023); Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2022); Musée d'art de Joliette, Quebec (2022); Prospect New Orleans (2021); the Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2021); and MoMA PS1, New York (2017), among others.

Lewis is represented by Sadie Coles HQ, London. Her work is held in the collections of Grinnell College Museum of Art, Iowa; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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