

Barbana Bojadzi, Jake Grewal, Cole Lu
25 Apr – 31 May 2025
The Upstairs

Bortolami Gallery is pleased to present a three-person exhibition with Barbana Bojadzi, Jake Grewal, and Cole Lu in the Upstairs.

The show features new paintings, including a three-part fifteen-foot work, by London-based artist Jake Grewal, a constellation of burnt birch panels by Cole Lu, and introduces Kosovan artist Barbana Bojadzi's multimedia works on rigid insulation sheeting. Within their variety of methods, the artists each mine the elements, capturing our collective and primordial response to the natural world. As humanity builds within its ever-expanding confines, so does the tension between its environment and its accrued memories and rituals. The artists' negotiations with fire, water, and the atmospheric are imbued with this tenuousness.

The liminal space where land and water meet is the site in which Grewal stakes his claim in this new series of work. Allegory and objectivity commingle to produce the artist's contemplative style, wherein figures and landscape concurrently build space. With translucent application and airiness of palette, dense rock formations and groups of persons seemingly emerge, caught in their traversals. These figures' explorations are ambiguous and without intention; they cross Grewal's terrain of light, water, and rock in the same way as the viewer's scanning, with unhurried and deliberate surveying.

Recalling the virtuosic surfaces of Old Masters' etchings as much as the primal markings of prehistoric caves, Cole Lu's burnt panels encapsulate an impossible span of time and the foundation of humanity. Within a grand, overarching purview of civilization lies a personal and mythological storytelling that registers between the individual recollection and a cross-historical collective. For the exhibition, Lu presents artworks which call to mind architectural elements from an absented site, a fireplace and a pair of clerestory windows, conjuring the memories of a non-place yet leaving them open as potential portals.

Seen from their side, Barbana Bojadzi's multi-media panels evidence, in their pastel blue and bubble gum pink, the character of their making. The support, nested beneath swaths of textural colors, produced from a variety of varnishes and paints, are heavy-duty construction panels. Through the reclamation of these humble materials, Bojadzi suggests history's stratification, layered and built. These highly produced and synthesized surfaces also recall blustering plein-air scenes, like a Turner produced from the industrial materials of its time.

Barbana Bojadzi (b. 1996, Kosovo, lives and works in Provins, France). Bojadzi recently won the Khalil de Chazournes Prize, awarded by the Amis des Beaux-Arts de Paris, as well as the 2023 the Sisley - Beaux-Arts de Paris Prize for Young Creation, and one of her works is now part of the Société Générale Art Collection. She was also part of many group shows, including "Société Générale Art Collection" at the Société Générale Tower, Puteaux (France) and "Felicita" at POUSH, Aubervilliers (France).

Jake Grewal (b. 1994, London, lives and works in London). Forthcoming exhibitions include: Jake Grewal: Under The Same Sky, Studio Voltaire, London, England (2025). Selected exhibitions include: Jake Grewal: Some days I feel more alive, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, England (2023); Dissolving Realms, curated by Katy Hessel, Kasmin Gallery, New York NY (2022); Drawing Room Biennial 2021, Drawing Room, London, England (2021); Deity, Arusha Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland (2020); Everyday is Sunday, UTA Artists Space, California CA (2020); No Time Like The Present, Public Gallery, London, England (2020); The Drawing Year, Open Studios 2019, London, England (2019); The Drawing Year End of Year Exhibition 2019, Royal Drawing School, London, England (2019); Best of the Drawing Year 18-19, Christie's, London, England (2019); Full English, Platform Southwark, London, England (2019).

Cole Lu (b. Taipei, Taiwan) lives and works in New York, NY. His work has been exhibited at Chapter NY; New York; Company Gallery; New York; The Drawing Center, New York; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; La Casa Encendida, Madrid; and the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis, among others. His writing has appeared in Coffee House Press, Minneapolis; WONDER, New York; and The Seventh Wave, New York. His publication Smells Like Content (Endless Editions, 2015) is in the artists' book collection of the Museum of Modern Art Library, New York.