

Press Release
Galerie Peter Kilchmann
Untitled Booth U58

Didier William Unveils Monumental Installation *Gesture to Home* at Art Basel Unlimited

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is proud to present *Gesture to Home*, a major installation by Haitian-American artist Didier William, debuting at Art Basel Unlimited. Installed at Booth U58, *Gesture to Home* merges painting, sculpture, and architectural presence to create a unified and immersive environment, underscoring William's expansive and deeply layered practice.

Originally commissioned by Prospect.6 and first exhibited at The Historic New Orleans Collection (Nov 2, 2024–Feb 2, 2025), *Gesture to Home* consists of four monumental paintings and eight sculptures. Each component contributes to a rich visual and conceptual landscape that considers history, identity, and memory through the lens of nature and the diasporic experience.

At the heart of the installation are towering depictions of bald cypress trees—a species native to Louisiana, revered for their longevity and resilience. William reimagines these trees as transhistorical witnesses and active, symbolic figures, embedding them with forms that evoke ritual, embodiment, and resistance. His cypress trees are not passive subjects but monumental sentinels carved with innumerable eyes—a motif central to his practice—turning the gaze back onto the viewer and confronting traditional dynamics of looking, surveillance, and power.

In the sculptural elements—crafted from ink on carved epoxy resin, EPS, wood, and steel—figures rise from sculpted forms that echo the trunks and buttresses of cypress trees. With dimensions reaching over three meters in height, these works exude presence and introspection. The carved eyes in each form are not merely decorative, but charged symbols of agency, visibility, and cultural memory—positioning the viewer as both observer and observed.

Spanning panels measuring up to 269.2 x 457.2 cm (106 x 180 in.), William's paintings are equally commanding. Their sweeping scale and physical detail encourage viewers to engage slowly and intimately, mirroring the meditative presence of the trees themselves. *Gesture to Home* transforms the exhibition space into a site of ritual, observation, and reflection, where the histories of displacement, migration, and resilience are materially inscribed into every surface.

“The cypresses function as a historical archive, as well as an ancestral and geological archive.”
— Didier William

William's practice is rooted in the politics of visibility and diasporic identity, drawing from his own lived experience immigrating from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to Miami at age six. *Gesture to Home* activates this perspective by placing cultural memory within the landscape, using the Louisiana swamp as both metaphor and material. The result is a powerful meditation on Blackness, rootedness, and the entanglements of place and history.

About the Artist

Didier William (b. 1983, Port-au-Prince, Haiti) lives and works in Philadelphia. He received his BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art and his MFA from the Yale School of Art. He is currently Assistant Professor at Rutgers University. His work has been exhibited at institutions including the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Wadsworth Atheneum, Bronx Museum of the Arts, and Museum of the African Diaspora, among others. His work is held in public collections such as the de Young Museum, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Carnegie Museum of Art, and Yale University Art Gallery.

Installation Details

Paintings (Acrylic on Panel)

- Triptych: 269.2 x 457.2 cm (106 x 180 in.)
- Diptych: 269.2 x 304.8 cm (106 x 120 in.)
- Single: 269.2 x 162.6 cm (106 x 64 in.)
- Single: 269.2 x 152.4 cm (106 x 60 in.)

Sculptures (Ink on carved epoxy resin, EPS, wood, steel)

- 304.8 x 180.3 x 120.7 cm (120 x 71 x 47 ½ in.)
- 249.8 x 83.8 x 82.5 cm (98 ¾ x 33 x 32 ½ in.)
- 241.3 x 101 x 132.1 cm (95 x 39 ¾ x 52 in.)
- 222.3 x 133 x 87.6 cm (87 ½ x 52 ¾ x 34 ½ in.)
- 95.3 x 44.5 x 36.8 cm (37 ½ x 17 ½ x 14 ½ in.)
- 96.5 x 41.3 x 41.3 cm (38 x 16 ¼ x 16 ¼ in.)
- 91.4 x 53.3 x 50.8 cm (36 x 21 x 20 in.)
- 80 x 31.8 x 30.5 cm (31 ½ x 12 ½ x 12 in.)

Images courtesy of the artist and Prospect New Orleans. Photos by Alex Marks.