
ERNESTO RENDA, KATHIA ST. HILAIRE, YE QIN ZHU***Roots Taking Root*****July 2–30, 2021**

James Fuentes is pleased to present **ERNESTO RENDA, KATHIA ST. HILAIRE, and YE QIN ZHU** in ***Roots Taking Root***, on view in our Allen & Eldridge project space, currently located in the viewing room at 55 Delancey St.

The exhibition presents three artists working in unconventional ways within the expanded realm of painting. The works on view montage a variety of techniques so as to become extraordinarily sculptural in their layering of both material and visual reference, often working in relief to carry or collage images, and in turn reworking the terms of painting as both a contemporary mode of image-making and a larger historical category.

Ernesto Renda's large-scale wax pastel rubbing carries two images within it: the first is a sunrise in full color against the sky behind city buildings, painted onto a canvas that also contains another image in relief form of figures populating a bar, which is picked up using a frottage technique. The work feels out its own dimensions in ways that are both technically flattened into the form of a painting, at the same time pushing into the limitations of what an image even is or may be. The eye reads the inherent images at two levels, in two perspectives and palettes, and yet these paired images become inextricably combined within the rectangular frame of the work—which, in doing so, becomes the site of their distortion and transformation. In the past, Renda has compared his 3-dimensional relief technique to the intrinsic presence of a fingerprint, which at once exhaustively designates the subject in question, while at the same time being somewhat arbitrary in its presence and meaning. Therefore it is both “whole” and flattened; objective and highly specific.

Kathia St. Hilaire carefully layers processes of printmaking in her work, while drawing upon her experiences growing up in a predominantly Caribbean and African American area in South Florida, and the subcultural tensions she personally experienced within this diasporic space. Her work is therefore informed by her own daily life as well as a desire to connectively address how her ancestral history exists within the present. St. Hilaire typically begins her works by creating a large drawing that is transferred onto sheets of linoleum by meticulously carving out the image to be printed onto a variety of surfaces, including paper, beauty products, industrial metal, fabric, and rubber tires—each chosen for their cultural, personal, and historical significance. In doing so, she seeks to affirm and memorialize, express and complicate, her experience of living within both marginalized and privileged communities of neo-diaspora.

Ye Qin Zhu's densely material work speaks to the artist's meditations on how ideas can press onto both the body and mind. Using a highly textured carved and collaged process, Zhu suggests that in the manipulation of material, an alchemical relation exists between the physical and mental states, and vice versa. Having emigrated from Taishan, China to New York City with his parents as a small child, the artist draws on his own experiences of home-seeking, finding solace and expression in the space of storytelling. The textures and tensions of Zhu's personal histories are enveloped within his art making—between manufacturing and gardening, belonging and displacement, anarchy and citizenry, spirit and material—the artist uses split modes that continuously fold-over and resurface within his practice.

Ernesto Renda (b. 1995, Trenton, NJ) is a painter and curator who currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. In 2018, he received his BFA in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design and his BA in Modern Culture and Media Studies from Brown University. Solo and two person exhibitions include Moskowitz Bayse Gallery (Los Angeles, CA, 2020), Empty Circle Space (Brooklyn, NY 2020), The National Arts Club (NYC, 2020), The Granoff Center at Brown University (Providence, RI, 2018) and the Unitarian Church (Summit, NJ, 2013). Group exhibitions include The National Arts Club (NYC), Field Projects Gallery (NYC), Regular Normal Gallery (NYC), High Noon Gallery (NYC), Wilson Fine Art Gallery at Georgetown College (KY), The Bell Gallery at Brown University (RI), the Gelman Gallery at RISD (RI), and Yellow Peril Gallery (RI). In 2021, he will be included in upcoming group exhibitions at 11Newel and Auxier Kline in New York.

Kathia St. Hilaire received an MFA from the Yale School of Art and BFA at from the Rhode Island School of Design. She is in the collections of the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), The Contemporary Art Museum of Luxembourg (MUDAM), Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection, and The Bunker. She has been included in exhibitions at Tang Museum, Derek Eller gallery, Blum and Poe, and Half gallery. She lives and works in Brooklyn, NY and Florida.

Ye Qin Zhu (b. 1986 in Taishan, China) received an MFA from Yale University in 2020 and a BFA from the Cooper Union in 2010. He has exhibited extensively in the East and West Coasts. He will be presenting forthcoming installations at Governors Island, New York and at Beam Camp in Stratford, NH this summer. Zhu is based in New Haven, CT and Brooklyn, NY.

Concurrently on view is **Thornton Dial, *Paintings: 1990-1998***, on view at 55 Delancey St until July 16.

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