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Publication: artdaily

Date: 20 December 2022

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artdaily

The First Art Newspaper on the Net Established in 1996 Friday, June 6, 2025

Jenkins Johnson Gallery extends 'Bloodchild' through January 28

SAN FRANCISCO, CA.- Jenkins Johnson Gallery is presenting Bloodchild, featuring work by Nyame Brown, Xandra Ibarra, Shara Mays, Gregory Rick, Stuart Robertson, and Leila Weefur. Taking its title from Octavia E. Butler's story titled "Bloodchild," first published in 1984, this exhibition invites the viewer to investigate the power of speculative fiction to imagine alternative world-buildings and narrative-making strategies.

Perceived as the mother of Afrofuturism, the genre blending science fiction, fantasy, and

history to speculate on liberated future scenarios through a Black lens, Butler wrote cautionary tales. In her stories and novels, she projects into the future to investigate possible solutions. Using Butler's "Bloodchild" story as a lens to look at the art-making today, the exhibition meditates on symbiosis, love, power, and tough choices. Set on a foreign planet inhabited by insect-like beings, "Bloodchild" is a coming of age story, raising provocative questions about sex roles, self-sacrifice, colonization, and species-interdepence. Similarly, the artists featured in this exhibition ask complex questions via speculative artistic practices and challenge their own mediums to imagine alternate futures.

Nyame Brown is an Afrofuturist installation artist working in the media of painting, drawing, cut paper, blackboards, augmented reality, gaming, and fashion. His work addresses the Black imagination as a space for new ways to perceive the Diaspora as trans-Atlantic, psychic, and imagined—not just through unity and similarity, but by looking at the dynamics of difference. Brown received his BFA from The School of The Art Institute of Chicago, and MFA from Yale School of Art and Architecture. He has been the recipient of the Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Award, and the Richard Dreihaus

Foundation Individual Artist Award, as well as a site-specific public commission for the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation. His participation in Theaster Gates' Black Artist Retreat in Chicago was followed by residencies at the Headlands Center for the Arts, Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, and the Joan Mitchell Center in New Orleans. Brown was honored with a solo exhibition at The Museum of the African Diaspora, and has held solo exhibitions across the U.S., notably at the Hearst Museum at St. Mary's College and the West Virginia University Art Museum. He has actively participated in group exhibitions in a variety of spaces in California, Illinois, Michigan and New York, and his work has been curated for inclusion at the Museum of Harlem, NY and the Prizm Art Fair at the Mana Contemporary in Miami.

Xandra Ibarra, who sometimes works under the alias of La Chica Boom, is an Oakland-based visual and performance artist from the US/Mexico border of El Paso/Juarez. Ibarra works across performance, video, and sculpture to address abjection and joy and the borders between proper and improper racialized, gendered, and queer subjects. Ibarra's work has been featured at El Museo de Arte Contemporañeo (Bogotá, Colombia), The Broad Museum (LA), ExTeresa Arte Actual (DF, Mexico), The Leslie-Lohman Museum (NYC) and Anderson Collection (Stanford) to name a few. Recent residencies include San Francisco Public Library (via SF Arts Commission), Vermont Studio Center, and Headlands Center for the Arts. She has been awarded the Lucas Visual Arts Fellowship, Queer Art Prize for Recent Work, Art Matters Grant, NALAC Fund for the Arts, Eisner Film and Video Prize, Murphy & Cadogan Contemporary Art Award and the Franklin Furnace Performance and Variable Media Award. Her work has been featured in Artforum, Paper Magazine, Hyperallergic, Huffington Post, ArtNews and in various academic journals nationally and internationally.

Shara Mays is a visual artist who creates paintings which take the shape and form of both landscape and intuitive figuration. Her works are performances of both subconscious motions and are in constant conversation with the natural world seen throughout Northern California. Originally from Princeville, North Carolina, her art practice represents an evolution of narrative, from a focus on literal, southern landscapes, and family struggles, to chasing freedom through the act of painting. She received her BFA degree from The Corcoran College of Art and Design at George Washington University, and her MFA in Painting from the San Francisco Art Institute. Recent shows include a solo show at Chandran Gallery in San Francisco, as well as group shows in galleries and museums such as the de Young Museum

of San Francisco, Root Division in San Francisco, and Round Weather Gallery in Oakland, California. She has—in the past—been awarded a residency at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, Vermont, and was an Affiliate Artist at the Headlands Center for the Arts in Sausalito, California from 2020 through 2022. Her work is included in both public and private collections, including the International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina.

Gregory Rick creates what he terms “History Paintings” in which he confronts personal traumas and experiences in dialogue with history and the broader political world. His paintings are occupied by characters that serve as archetypes of his memories, introspection, and the absurdity and expansiveness of world history. He received his BFA from the California College of the Arts (CCA) and his MFA in art practice from Stanford University. Rick has exhibited widely nationally, at Stanford Art Gallery, Palo Alto, CA; Patricia Sweetow Gallery, San Francisco, CA; Bass & Reiner Gallery, San Francisco, CA; slash art, San Francisco, CA; Ever Gold [Projects], San Francisco, CA; Kala Art Institute, Berkeley, CA; Hair and Nails, Minneapolis, MN; Rochester Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and more. Recently, Rick has received the SFMOMA’s 2022 SECA Award, 15th annual San Francisco Bay Area Artadia Award for 2022, and the Dedalus MFA Fellowship from the Dedalus Foundation. He is also the recipient of the Jack K. and Gertrude Murphy Award from SomArts, the Nathan Oliveira Fellowship from Stanford University, and the Hamaguchi Print Media Scholarship Award from CCA.

Stuart Robertson is a mixed media artist who paints, collages, and assembles images of Black life inspired by the nostalgia for his birthplace, confrontations with the American dream, and fantasies of the African Diaspora’s future. His creative and educational practices prioritize interdisciplinary discourse and aesthetic innovation that better serve the representation of the Black diaspora in contemporary art. Robertson received a BA in studio art from Davidson College in 2015, a MSEd from the University of Pennsylvania in 2018, and an MFA from Stanford University in June 2020. He is a recipient of the 2019 Cadogan Scholarship from the San Francisco Foundation, a 2020-21 Graduate Fellowship at the Headlands Center for the Arts and a 2021 Honorary artist-in-residence at the Kala Art Institute. Stuart is currently the Summer 2022 Space Program, SF artist-in-residence, and the 2021-2023 teaching artist-in-residence at the Lawrenceville School, NJ. He has exhibited in Charlotte, Charlottesville, Kingston, New Jersey, New York City, Prague, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. as a prizewinning artist in The Outwin 2022: American Portraiture Today for the National Portrait Gallery’s triennial Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition.

Leila Weefur is an artist, writer, and curator based in Oakland, CA. Their interdisciplinary practice examines the performativity intrinsic to systems of belonging. The work brings together concepts of sensorial memory, abject Blackness, hyper surveillance, and the erotic. Weefur has worked with local and national institutions including The Kitchen NYC, Locust Projects Miami, The Wattis Institute, McEvoy Foundation, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Museum of the African Diaspora, and Smack Mellon. Weefur is a lecturer at Stanford University and a member of The Black Aesthetic. Through film and architectural installation, Leila Weefur examines the performative elements connected to systems of belonging, present in Black, queer, gender-variant life. They combine still- life imagery, gesture, and sound to communicate feeling and evoke sensorial responses. They construct environments that invite viewers into the possibility of understanding a narrative through the way bodies experience it. Through an entanglement of beauty and horror, the work combines concepts of sensorial memory, architectural psychology, hyper surveillance, and the erotic.

They implement ways language can be used as a system for determining access and aid in disidentification.

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