

SHARIF BEY
EDDY KAMUANGA
PAT PHILLIPS
MICHAEL RAY CHARLES
KATHIA ST HILAIRE

20th March – 8th May 2021

Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of sculptures, paintings and works on paper by Sharif Bey, Eddy Kamunaga, Michael Ray Charles, Pat Phillips and Kathia St Hilaire.

Sharif Bey



“I was raised in an anti-imperialist household - that was the culture,” Sharif Bey explains, “a culture of asking, of questioning, of pushing back on the narratives that media has fed to us.” Over the past thirty years, Bey has channeled this impulse into his clay practice.

Bey’s sculptures reference the visual heritage of Africa and Oceania, as well as present-day African American culture, exploring the significance of traditional beads and figurines through contemporary reinterpretations of these forms. He works primarily with ceramics, a medium historically used by communities to create both functional objects and objects of worship. Investigating the symbolic and formal properties of archetypal motifs, Bey questions how the meaning of icons transform across cultures and time.

Bey does not shy away from stereotypical associations. Instead, he reappropriates and recontextualizes this imagery to challenge the cultural mainstream. For example, in the Protest Shields, the artist incorporates ceremonial elements with crowns of raised fists – another symbol whose meaning has continually shifted, from workers’ movements of the early twentieth century, to the Black Power movement of nineteen sixties and seventies, to today’s Black Lives Matter movement.

Sharif Bey [b. 1974, Pittsburgh, PA] lives and works in Syracuse, NY, where in addition to this studio practice he is an associate professor in arts education and teaching and leadership in the College of Visual and Performing Arts and Syracuse University’s School of Education. Bey earned his B.F.A. in ceramics from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, an M.F.A. in studio art from the University of North Carolina and a Ph.D. in art education from Penn State University. He has participated in many artist-in-residencies and fellowships to hone his craft, and is included in numerous public collections including: The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Smithsonian American Art Museum and Renwick Gallery, Washington DC; the Columbus Museum of Art, OH; and the United States Embassies of Khartoum, Sudan; Kampala, Uganda; and Jakarta, Indonesia. His forthcoming exhibitions include a solo exhibition at the Everson Museum in Syracuse, NY in 2021.

Eddy Kamuanga



Kamuanga Ilunga explores the seismic shifts in the economic, political and social identity of the DRC that have taken place since colonialism. Increasingly globalised, there is a sense in the DRC that some of its people are rejecting its heritage, a conflict that fuels Kamuanga Ilunga's work. His large-scale figurative compositions possess a depth of historical understanding, with a striking and sophisticated interplay of the intensity of space juxtaposed with emptiness. The listless figures seem to mourn the loss of their traditional cultures, their bright fabrics hanging limply from their bodies, their hands clutching ritual objects whose functions seem less and less apparent. For his latest project, Kamuanga uses the history of the Kongo Kingdom to reveal the legacy of

its leaders and examines the impact this has had on contemporary Congolese society. These new works feature objects such as porcelain used by early Portuguese traders as well as pottery, such as Toby jugs, which later entered the trade routes in the Kongo Kingdom for the trade of slaves. In this body of works, Eddy pays tribute to the slaves and ancestors who resisted this human trafficking by presenting a vision of the socio-political landscape of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1991, Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga studied painting at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Kinshasa. While the strict, almost 19th-century style of formal figuration that has been taught at the Académie since its colonial-era founding allowed the artist to develop sophisticated painterly skills, ultimately, he found its program conceptually stifling, and abandoned his studies there, in 2011. Though there was little in place supporting that decision, he quickly aligned himself with other artists to establish M'Pongo, a group studio where a diverse set of young artists shared ideas and exhibited together to generate their own vibrant scene, which tapped into the high-energy creativity of contemporary Kinshasa.

In 2017, Kamuanga Ilunga's work was included in the exhibition *African-Print Fashion Now!* at the Fowler Museum, UCLA, touring to Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis, Tennessee, and Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina. His work has been exhibited internationally at institutions including Frist Art Museum, Nashville, Tennessee, USA; Kunsthau, Graz, Austria; Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Birmingham, UK; Saatchi Gallery and the Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK. His work is in important private and public collections including: Private Collection Laurence Graff OBE; Zeitz Collection of Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town, South Africa; the Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, USA; Pizzuti Collection of the Columbus Museum of Art, USA; the Norval Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa; and Scheryn Art Collection, Cape Town, South Africa.

Pat Phillips



Pat Phillips' works evoke the connection between sweltering heat and aggression, hostility and proximity to the "other." While media has always depicted the imagery of events such as Hurricane Katrina, the Rodney King verdict, or a mere Jordan shoe release, we often forget the nuances of these dynamics in relation to the proverbial powder kegs of our political and social climate. Because of this, our accounts can become somewhat fantastical.

"The universe is a dark forest. Every civilization is an armed hunter stalking through the trees like a ghost, gently pushing aside branches that block the path and trying to tread without sound. Even breathing is done with care. The hunter has to be careful, because everywhere in the forest are stealthy hunters like him. If he finds other life—another hunter, an angel or a demon, a delicate infant or a tottering old man, a fairy or a demigod—there's only one thing he can do: open fire and eliminate them. In this forest, hell is other people. An eternal threat that any life that exposes its own existence will be swiftly wiped out."

□ Liu Cixin, *The Dark Forest*

In this series of paintings, I think about the perception of the "armed hunter". In recent times of civil unrest, we have a society not only divided by fear, but an America waiting. An America that despite it's empty pleas for civilized discourse, anticipates the chaos. Anticipates the gotcha moment when their discernment for "the other" is validated by cherry-picked footage from the nightly news. That moment when the hunter will pick up the brick in an act of destruction...rather than the possibility that they are wanting to rebuild.

Pat Phillips was born in Lakenheath, England in 1987. Relocating to Louisiana as a young child, he spent his early teenage years painting and photographing boxcars in a small town. His work was featured in the 2019 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Solo exhibitions include *ROOTS* (Antenna Gallery, New Orleans, LA), *Told You Not to Bring That Ball* (Masur Museum of Art, Monroe, LA) and *SubSuperior* (Catinca Tabacaru Gallery (New York, NY). Phillips has participated in residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture. In 2017, he received a Joan Mitchell Painters & Sculptors Grant. His work can be found in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Block Museum of Art, Evanston, IL; and New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA, among others.

Michael Ray Charles



Michael Ray Charles is a contemporary American painter. His work explores historic African American stereotypes from the Antebellum South, appropriating images from advertising and pop culture to expose the underlying racism prevalent in contemporary culture. Charles creates a mimetic vocabulary of cultural, racial, and historicized images to subvert those themes and explore surviving

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caricatures that continue to appear in popular media, such as Aunt Jemima or Sambo. "Stereotypes have evolved. I'm trying to deal with present and past stereotypes in the context of today's society," the artist has said. Born in Lafayette, LA in 1967, he went on to earn his BFA from McNeese State University and his MFA from the University of Houston. His work has been both critically celebrated and the source of controversy, and in 2001 Charles was the subject of an Art:21 short documentary. He was appointed as the Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished Professor of Painting in 2014 at the University of Houston's School of Art, and he has exhibited internationally, notably in the Austin Museum of Art, the Knox Art Gallery, and The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Kathia St Hilaire



With a unique painting language, Kathia St. Hilaire distinctively mixes images of exoticized Caribbean seascapes or family gatherings with packaging for sugar or box braids, items that relate to her Haitian identity. "I look at different types of commercial or raw materials that play an important role in the Black diaspora," she says. "I think so much about race is surface level, and there is little understanding about the culture."

St. Hilaire's layered paintings nod to her undergraduate training in printmaking at the Rhode Island School of Design. Using a reduction relief-printing technique, she starts with a large drawing before transferring it onto a sheet of linoleum, which she then carves out in small sections and prints onto everything from beauty products to tires. These steps are repeated multiple times until the whole linoleum is carved

away.

Kathia St. Hilaire (b. 1995) interlaces elaborate processes and personal narratives into her practice. Drawing from Haitian Vodun culture and her upbringing in a South Floridian Caribbean community, St. Hilaire's interdisciplinary work is densely layered and evocative of traditional tapestry fabrics. Using relief printing techniques and oil based and metallic ink on sugar packaging and box braid packs, she elevates these discarded objects into meaningful materials, reflecting on the notion of beauty products as luxury commodities.

"All my life I have lived in a predominantly Caribbean and African American area in South Florida. My experiences in growing up with tension between African American and Caribbean subcultures have influenced me to see how my history exists within their diaspora. My work is driven by both my reality and my connection to Haitian diaspora. I recognize both my ties and disconnection from my family's ancestral past by considering the possibilities of urban space, cultural identification, innate and intuitive beliefs, as well as a conscious seeking of links that reveal continuities hidden by the mainstream. Through an interdisciplinary process, my work affirms and memorializes controversial, historic, and political issues that deal with both marginalized and privileged communities of neo-diaspora."

Kathia St. Hilaire (b. 1995, Palm Beach, FL.) received her MFA in Painting/ Printmaking at the Yale School of Art in 2020. She has received her BFA in Printmaking at the Rhode Island School of Design. She is the 2019 recipient of the Jorge M. Perez Award.