

**YASHUA KLOS**  
***Building Our Being***

*The Wildflowers Remember Her*, 2023, Woodblock prints on archival paper, Japanese rice paper, acrylic, spray paint, colored pencil, and wood mounted on canvas, 121.9 x 125.7 cm (48 x 49 1/2 in)

**21 September – 4 November 2023**

In his second solo exhibition with the gallery, and his debut at Zidoun-Bossuyt's Paris location, Klos continues to evolve his sui generis collage constructions. Building images from his own woodblock printed source material, his work features a new element — wooden sticks enveloped in Japanese rice paper. As much as this choice of material echoes the deep roots of printmaking, it also exemplifies Klos' gesture of both honoring and breaking with traditional art making processes. Similarly, Klos bends the convention of portraiture to stage his exploration of 'identity-as-construct'. Each visage of his subjects is a hybrid; drawn from a composite of found photos, images of friends, and familial memories. Here, portraiture is less about likeness, but more an opportunity for subjective and ambitious storytelling.

Like many African American families, Klos' family departed the American South for Detroit during the Great Migration for jobs in the city's auto industry. The influx of labor from this new Black population would multiply the city's economy exponentially. Ultimately, the grip of capitalism would lead to outsourcing jobs, leaving Detroit with swaths of abandoned buildings and land plots. Today, these plots and vacant structures are being reclaimed by sprouting weeds and indigenous wildflowers, reminiscent of Michigan's days as undeveloped prairie land. Klos leverages the imagery of these wildflowers, embodying not only

the ‘sprawl’ of migration, but also the resilience of the Black populace who built the American Midwest. Simultaneously, he turns his attention to Detroit’s enduring Art Deco architecture, a style that originated in Paris, and found a home in the once thriving American city. Klos harnesses these Art Deco motifs to indicate the city’s past ambition as a futuristic and ‘leading’ American city. These design patterns haunt his compositions, lingering in the background and impressing upon the faces of his subjects. In Klos’ own words, “One’s identity cannot be separated from the geography around them. Just as the environment is built by people, the environment in turn — builds us.”

In the show’s title, Klos’ reference to ‘Building’ is threefold. Firstly, ‘Building’ is the very act of constructing cities across the American Midwest through the industrial labor of a migrated Black population. As a verb, ‘Building’ refers to the process of constructing one’s identity from the influences in one’s own environment. And finally, as a noun, the word references the Art Deco buildings themselves, signifying Detroit’s collapsed capitalist promise. Woodblock printing, a medium richly steeped in African American art tradition and frequently used for creating political posters and pamphlets, and illustrations is a cornerstone of Klos’ practice. Following in the footsteps of revered artists such as Elizabeth Catlett and Charles White, Klos reimagines the portrayal of the Black figure within this medium. Unlike Klos’ predecessors, his figures are not in the act of labor, but rather restfully engaged with the sprawling wildflowers, and enjoying their status as portrait subjects.

## Biography

Yashua Klos was born in 1977 in Chicago, Illinois. He lives in Harlem and works in the Bronx. He is a visual artist who employs a unique process of collaging his own woodblock printed textures to engage ideas about Blackness as an adaptive material for survival strategies. Klos’ work has been shown in museums and galleries across the States and internationally, including the Studio Museum of Harlem, the Weatherspoon Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina, What If The World in Johannesburg, South Africa, Tilton Gallery in New York City, and UTA Artist Space in LA. Klos’ first solo museum show was in 2022 at the Wellin Museum in Clinton NY. Klos’ works have been reviewed in the NY Times, and he’s been awarded residencies at Skowhegan, The Vermont Studio Center, and Bemis. He is the recipient of a Joan Mitchell Fellowship and a NYFA grant. His work is part of the collections of Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, The Seattle Museum of Art, and The Wellin Museum at Hamilton College.