

# SUGARCANE

## Yashua Klos: 'Building' Identity and Artistry in the Heart of Paris

By Elaine Gonzalez



*It's Planted In Your Palm*, 2023, Woodblock prints on archival paper, Japanese rice paper, muslin, acrylic, spray paint, and wood mounted on paper, 83.8 x 147.3 cm (33 x 58 in)

Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery is thrilled to unveil the highly-anticipated solo exhibition of artist Yashua Klos in the heart of Paris. Marking his second solo showcase with the gallery and his debut at Zidoun-Bossuyt's esteemed Paris location, Klos is set to captivate art enthusiasts with his distinctive collage constructions, pushing the boundaries of traditional artistry.

Klos' latest works bring together a captivating fusion of woodblock printed source material and an innovative addition of wooden sticks encased in Japanese rice paper. This unique choice of material pays homage to the roots of printmaking while simultaneously challenging the conventions of traditional art processes. In a dynamic twist on portraiture, Klos invites viewers to explore the concept of 'identity-as-construct.' Each visage he presents is a mesmerizing amalgamation, drawing inspiration from found photographs, images of friends, and cherished familial

memories. In Klos' world, portraiture transcends mere likeness, becoming a canvas for subjective and ambitious storytelling.

The artist's personal history intertwines with the broader narrative of African American families during the Great Migration. Like countless others, Klos' own family left the American South in pursuit of job opportunities in Detroit's burgeoning auto industry. The influx of Black labor played a pivotal role in Detroit's economic boom. However, the relentless grip of capitalism eventually led to job outsourcing, leaving behind a city scarred by abandoned buildings and vacant lots.

Today, these abandoned spaces are being gradually reclaimed by resilient weeds and indigenous wildflowers, reminiscent of Michigan's pristine prairie landscapes. Klos harnesses the imagery of these wildflowers to symbolize not only the 'sprawl' of migration but also the enduring strength of the Black community that played a pivotal role in building the American Midwest. Simultaneously, he delves into the iconic Art Deco architecture that once defined Detroit's skyline—a style that originated in Paris but found a lasting home in the city's flourishing past. These Art Deco motifs subtly permeate Klos' compositions, leaving an indelible mark on 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."

The title of the exhibition, 'Building,' carries a layered significance. It signifies the act of constructing cities across the American Midwest through the industrious labor of the migrating Black population. It also alludes to the process of constructing one's own identity, shaped by the influences of their environment. Lastly, it references the iconic Art Deco buildings themselves, serving as poignant symbols of Detroit's once-promising capitalist aspirations, now fallen.

Klos' chosen medium of woodblock printing, deeply rooted in African American art tradition, has historically been employed for creating political posters, pamphlets, and illustrations. In the footsteps of esteemed artists like Elizabeth Catlett and Charles White, Klos reimagines the portrayal of the Black figure within this medium. Unlike his predecessors, Klos' figures are not depicted in labor but are instead depicted in serene communion with the sprawling wildflowers, reveling in their roles as subjects of artistic exploration.

This exhibition promises to be a powerful testament to Yashua Klos' artistic evolution, his exploration of identity, and his profound connection to history and place. Art enthusiasts and connoisseurs alike are invited to witness this groundbreaking showcase at Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery, Paris.