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Peculiar Countenance

Pia Bakala, Grace Bromley, Gilad Leiba,
Alexis E. Mabry, and Giancarlo Venturini

Opening Friday July 14, 6-8pm

July 14 - August 20, 2023

Thursday - Sunday 11am - 5pm

Press Release

D. D. D. D. is pleased to present *Peculiar Countenance*, a group exhibition with Pia Bakala, Grace Bromley, Gilad Leiba, Alexis E. Mabry, and Giancarlo Venturini.

Created in collaboration with artists all currently working in Richmond, Virginia, *Peculiar Countenance* explores ways of depicting the human subject, particularly through the head. The word countenance and its duplexity are at play here; works shown both depict the human head in literal, bodily forms and are aware of their own means of self-presentation.

Each work exhibited presents the head through different visual and symbolic frames. While most works are united in a similarly small scale, each artist encounters the head and thus their own body in unique, unconventional ways. Grace Bromley abstracts bodily cavities into painterly landscapes. Faintly rendering something akin to an ear in one canvas, she uses gouache and oil paint to turn her paintings into vast color fields. Giancarlo Venturini bears a seemingly similar approach to isolating body parts from the whole of the human self. However, he remains highly attentive to the realistic rendering of the tooth on his canvas, dislocating it only by isolating it in a blue abyss that fills the rest of the canvas.

Alexis E. Mabry plays similarly with literal inclusions of the human body, turning braided hair and a clay sculpted nose into grotesque and gory relief sculptures when confined to her vernacular wood frames. Her drawings stem from a child-like visual language, one that combines a playful naiveté with sinister violent imagery. Pia Bakala has a shared interest in violent images in her pictorial landscapes. Informed by her feelings of alienation as a transgender woman, Bakala's paintings depict minefields of decapitated heads, forcing her viewer to confront their own notions of nature and artifice when considering human countenance in painting.

Gilad Leiba branches into the sculptural realm with *Untitled*, placing a realistically-rendered, partially ready-made sculpture of his own body upside down and thus turning such themes of self-presentation on their head in the gallery space. The sheer scale of Leiba's work—almost human size—also forces a unique confrontation of the viewer with a mirror of their own body.

Each artist speaks in distinct painterly and sculptural languages, yet the works included all reflect on the human form and its pictorial representations. Together, these works collectively create an original narrative about human countenance.

Artist Biographies

Pia Bakala (b.1991) is a Richmond, VA based painter who was born in Aurora, Illinois. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting and a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2013. She is currently a 2024 MFA Candidate at Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Painting and Printmaking. Influenced by her personal experiences as a transgender woman, Bakala creates painterly expressions of everyday internal conflicts. In doing so, she examines various cultural preconceptions of trans-femininity, expressions of sexuality, and binaries of nature and artifice.

Grace Bromley (b. 1994, USA) is a Richmond, VA based artist. Born and raised in Chicago, IL, she attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with a BFA and a focus in Painting. Her work explores mythological/familial archetypes, gender performativity, and hierarchies within nature, using a sense of fantasy and dark humor. Her work has been shown at Thierry Goldberg Gallery, New Collectors Gallery NYC, Bloom Galerie, St. Tropez, and Spring/Break NYC 2022. She participated in Spring/Break LA 2023 as an independent curator. She is currently attending the MFA program at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Gilad Leiba is an MFA candidate at VCU Department of Painting and Printmaking at Richmond, Virginia. Hailing from Tel Aviv, Israel, Leiba incorporates psychological, historical and religious materials into his body of work, which consists of painting, sculpture and video. Often operating in a stage/prop master-like manner, he investigates how objects and structures that hold their respective meaning, significance and lineage can coincide to mediate a certain - private - human condition. Leiba's works have been shown in Israel and Europe, and his poetry and short prose (in Hebrew) has been published in different platforms.

Alexis E. Mabry (b. 1985) is a mixed media artist born in Dallas, Texas. She received a Bachelors of Fine Art from Texas State University, San Marcos, TX. in 2019. She is a 2024 MFA candidate from the Virginia Commonwealth University's Painting and Printmaking program. Using collage, paint, found objects, and thrifted objects Mabry condenses anecdotes of personal experiences into material imagery that reflects narratives of identity, self expression, escapism, and rebellion. Her research examines personas and social performances, how they are perceived by society and popular culture, and the environments that create them. Finding the idea of a person more compelling when it lives in this popular imagination, with a tenuous connection to lived reality. She collects stories and objects that she encounters in her community and landscape that resonate with these shifting identities.

Giancarlo Venturini (b. 1999, Boonton, NJ) is an artist that lives and works in New Jersey. He attended Mason Gross School of Art and Design at Rutgers University, receiving his bachelors in 2021. His work was featured in Spring/Break LA 2023. He is currently enrolled as an MFA student at Virginia Commonwealth University.

For more information please e-mail uma@dddd.pictures