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RELUCTANT GRAVITIES

CANDACE HILL-MONTGOMERY, JASLEEN KAUR, OLU OGUNNAIKE, KANG SEUNG LEE, TOURMALINE

Preview: Thursday 27 June, 18:00-20:00

Exhibition: 28 June - 3 August 2024

Hollybush Gardens presents *Reluctant Gravities*, a group exhibition including **Candace Hill-Montgomery**, **Jasleen Kaur**, **Olu Ogunnaike**, **Kang Seung Lee** and **Tourmaline**. The exhibition is named after a title by the American poet and novelist Rosmarie Waldrop who addresses the behaviour of words on a page in a manner that invokes the stage. In looking to Waldrop, drawn to the possibilities of the gaps between words, consideration is given to contested, overlapping and invisible spaces; a place of generative possibility through a constant evolving set of relations.

Through the works on view, the artists bring together themes of connectivity and community, reflecting on social environments through storytelling, symbolism and gesture; a relational approach to community building and a shared sensibility for the tactility of commonplace materials, often discarded, or leftover. From familial archives and queer histories to poetry, wordplay and the natural world, the artists consider how to make form of these histories and materials.

Kaur explores memory and the manifold references and resonances of everyday objects through installation, sound and family photographs reworked with resin. Intergenerational lineage is likewise traced in Lee's work, whose research reconfigures and reimagines transnational queer narratives through his intricately rendered drawings and embroidery. Hill-Montgomery's weavings, made on homemade looms, combine both techniques and materials. Layered in composition and subject matter, they mirror her poetry practice and draw from pop-cultural and religious iconography, art-historical and literary references. Ogunnaike works with salvaged wood, print and installation to consider the renewable nature of materials. His spatial interventions explore the trajectories of people and the spaces they inhabit, while Tourmaline's film alludes to the pollinator which carries life through garden spaces and time. She writes, 'The film is designed to feel like a portal, or as if you are a pollinator entering a flower to disperse your experience... to feel calibrated through your own sense of aliveness and the aliveness of people who came before.'

Candace Hill-Montgomery's weavings and their wry titles, including *come away IF Count Celery lead me Migrate too Count Zucchini's rediscovery* (2021) and *Manhood Played Bi Guitar Maid* (2024) evoke cut-out collages and free-association poetry. These intricately layered works, made from materials including Navajo sheep wool, linen, silk, kid mohair, punis and rawhide, allude to the artist's own personal narrative as well as broader socio-political and feminist concerns, popular culture, desire and devotion.

Jasleen Kaur's research reimagines tradition and inherited myths. In *Untitled* (2023) an automated Indian harmonium - an instrument on which Kaur learned devotional singing from her father - rests upon an image of land restitution in Moga, Punjab where foundations are being ceremonially laid for a mosque to be reconstructed. A series of wall-based resin works *Untitled* (2023) depict enlarged family photos encased in an orange-tinted resin, reminiscent of the Scottish soft drink Irn-Bru. While in Kaur's childhood home, old roti would be torn up and thrown on the driveway for birds to eat, here they are carefully positioned to obscure the faces of family members, except for the artist's. In these images, there is a gesture of being held by hands or amongst bodies and a sense of nostalgia heightened by the sepia glow. These images are a nod to origins but also dis-identifications and the family structure as a place of the artist's political and feminist education, albeit inadvertently.

First presented at Spike Island, Bristol in 2024 as part of **Olu Ogunnaike's** solo exhibition, and reconfigured for the gallery space, Ogunnaike's installation consists of the artist's handmade version of the industrial sheet material oriented strand board (OSB). Ogunnaike's panels are built up in layers using offcuts of ebony, walnut, rosewood, and mahogany and bound together with tree sap. Positioned across a doorway and extending above the mezzanine, exposing the reverse of the boards which are covered with silt from the River Avon, Ogunnaike's interventions both extend and reconfigure the existing architecture.

In *Untitled (Harvey)* (2020-22) **Kang Seung Lee** pays tribute to American politician and gay activist Harvey Milk (1930-78). Detailed graphite drawings on paper, embroidered antique 24k gold thread on Sambe and a series of photographs record the next generation of plants repropagated from the cactus found in Milk's possession when he died. Lee's drawings and photographs intimately document the plants, shared among artists and activists in LA, invoking the care, collaboration and generosity passed between generations.

Tourmaline, as the main subject in the six-minute film *Pollinator* (2022), becomes an agent and metaphor for the pleasure and growth of her community. The film incorporates archival footage of American gay liberation activist Marsha P. Johnson's funeral procession, the artist's father singing in the backyard of her grandparents' house in Memphis, Tennessee, black-and-white footage featuring the artist moving through the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and clips from a simulated space flight. The score is composed by Danni Venne and produced with tuning forks originally made for NASA tuned to the frequency of one Venus rotation around the sun.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Candace Hill-Montgomery (b. 1945 Queens, New York; lives and works in Bridgehampton, Long Island, New York). Her decades-long career has spanned a breadth of media, from painting, photography, installation art, public interventions, video, poetry and performance. In the 1980s, she exhibited at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the New Museum, Franklin Furnace and Fashion Moda in New York, and at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore. She made public installations across the city and published artist books of poetry and photography alongside texts in publications including 'Wedge and Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics'. In 1983, together with Lucy R. Lippard, she organised and exhibited in *Working Artists/WorkingWomen/ WorkingTogether* at Gallery 1199, New York. She recently had a solo show *Pretty Birds Peer Speak Sow Peculiar*, at Blankforms, New York and her latest publications include the collection *Muss Sill* (Distance No Object, 2020) and *Short Leash Kept On* (Materials, 2022), a long poem inspired by detective fiction and the writing of Lloyd Addison and Russell Atkins.

Jasleen Kaur (b.1986 Pollokshields, Glasgow; lives and works in London). Solo exhibitions include *Alter Altar*, Tramway, Glasgow (2023), *Flesh 'n' Blood*, Humber Street Gallery, Hull; *Gut Feelings Meri Jaan*, Touchstones Rochdale (both 2021) and *Be Like Teflon*, Glasgow Women's Library (2019). Group shows include *Imagining Otherwise*, Primary, Nottingham; *CLASSifications*, Aspex, Portsmouth (2024); *Not new, otherwise*, Build Hollywood, Glasgow; *A Tall Order!*, Touchstones, Rochdale (2023); *My Body is a temple of Gloom*, Wellcome Collection, London (2021); Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle (2019); *The Driver's Seat*, Cubitt Gallery, London (2018); *This is Water*, MIMA, Middlesbrough (2018); Eastside Projects, Birmingham (2017). In 2019 her book *Be Like Teflon* was co-published by Glasgow Women's Library and Dent-De-Leone. Kaur was awarded the Paul Hamlyn Artist Award in 2021 and is nominated for the 2024 Turner Prize.

Olu Ogunnaike (b.1986 London; lives and works in London). Solo exhibitions include *Fix Your Face*, Spike Island, Bristol (2024), *An Enclosed Garden*, gb agency, Paris (2022); *I'd rather stand*, Museum Folkwang, Essen (2021); *Crumbs*, CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (2021) and *London Plain*, Cell Project Space, London (2020). Group exhibitions include: Communion, Bold Tendencies, London (2024); *Systemic Love*, CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (2023); *To the fire next time*, Villa Arson, Nice (2023); *Testament*, Goldsmiths CCA, London (2022); *Domestic Drama*, HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, Graz (2021) and *Reconfigured*, Timothy Taylor, New York (2021).

Kang Seung Lee (b.1978 South Korea; lives and works in Los Angeles, USA). His work frequently engages the legacy of transnational queer histories, particularly as they intersect with art history. Lee's work has been included in international exhibitions such as 60th Venice Biennale (2024); Made in LA, Hammer Museum (2023); documenta fifteen (2022); New Museum Triennial (2021); and Gwangju Biennale (2021). Solo exhibitions and projects include MASP (Museu de Arte de São Paulo), São Paulo (forthcoming 2024); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (2023); Vincent Price Art Museum, Los Angeles (2023); Gallery Hyundai, Seoul (2021); Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles (2021, 2017, 2016); 18th Street Arts Center, Santa Monica, CA (2020). Selected group exhibitions include Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2023); de Appel, Amsterdam (2023); Craft Contemporary, Los Angeles (2023); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2022); MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2021); Asia Cultural Center, Gwangju (2020); National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul (2020); Daelim Museum, Seoul (2020); Palm Springs Art Museum, CA (2019); PARTICIPANT INC, New York (2019); LA><ART, Los Angeles (2017); and Centro Cultural Metropolitano, Quito, Ecuador (2016). Lee is the recipient of Artadia Los Angeles Award (2023); LACMA x Snapchat: Monumental Perspectives(2022); the 18th Street Arts Center Artist Lab Residency (2020) and apexart New York International Open Call (2019).

Tourmaline (b.1983, Boston, Massachusetts, USA; lives and works in Miami, Florida, USA) is an artist, filmmaker, writer, and activist whose practice highlights the experiences of Black, queer, and trans communities and their capacity to impact the world. Solo exhibitions include *Video Room: Tourmaline*, MASP, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2024); *Pleasure and Pollinator*, MUDAM, Luxembourg (2023); *Pleasure Garden*, Chapter NY, New York (2020-21). Group exhibitions include *Whitney Biennial 2024: Better Than The Real Thing*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; *Acts of Resistance: Photography, Feminisms and the Art of Protest*, South London Gallery, London, UK (2024) *The Irreplaceable Human*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark; *Like Magic*, MASS MoCA, Massachusetts and Artist and Society, Tate Modern, London (2023). Tourmaline's film *Salacia* (2019) is currently on view at Tate Modern as part of the Art and Society display.

For press enquiries and further information, please contact: grace@hollybushgardens.co.uk

Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm; or by appointment.