

Press Release

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:iidrr Gallery: *Through Thought*

October 17 - 27, 2024

Curated by Bebe Uddin

Artists: MAESTRO, Sujetka, Cidney Cher, Sherly Fan, Arielle Weenonia Gray, Emma June Jones, Rui Kez, Jeremiah Morris, Sydney Wilson, Annu Yadav, Bethany Yeap

Text co-written by Murph Phi, Bebe Uddin, & Zhanying

In this first series installment of “Through Thought”, :iidrr gallery is pleased to invite audiences into a thought provoking collection of works from artists along the east coast that allow us a look into the journey of creating work that reflects the distinct narrative histories that embody the lived experience of the artist, while exposing the choreographic relationship between realization, reason and reaction.

The intention of “Through Thought” is to challenge the viewer’s mind, beliefs or views of a particular subject, thought or the idea presented in the submitted work. The target submission is not completely fixed on imagination or just the idea or psychology of thought, and can also be communicated or informed by thought provoking behaviors. This is a way to help the person experiencing the work to understand conception from more of a minimal perspective if they were to land in a moment of photography. In the first installment of the series, we tasked each artist to contend with the concept of “Figurative.”

Figurative. What does it mean? What is its nature? Is it of the body or mind? Does figurative pertain to the lexical, theoretical, universal, or internal dimension of and of not the self? Can it be expressed, or does it simply exist as is? Art conventions recognize figurativism as relating to the anatomy—the vessel by which the soul is carried and materializes action into phrase and meaning. In this first installment, audiences are challenged to extend our understanding of figurative as a construct existing beyond the corporeal, beyond the limitations of speech and convention, as art in the abstract is inherently figurative, or is it? We invite each artist to offer their interpretation of this speculative concept.

Each artist featured in “Through Thought” suggests a subversion of our normative definition of figurative to extend into the realm of varied art mediums. The exhibit intends to explore the abstract, conceptual, literal, and learned dimensions of critical figurative thinking and its interpretive materialization via the personalized narratives of the artist’s lived experiences. Each artist has mobilized a mode of the imaginative from the real, surreal, and hyper-real to reflect narratives distinct to each own’s historical framework of perceiving themselves and the world around them. The artist has achieved a semblance of the figurative. Through a varied series of

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configuration, disfiguration, reconfiguration, and transfiguration, a narrative has been solidified utilizing themes that touch on the social, economic, and political climate we find ourselves presently divided within.

Deploying black and white monochromatic drawings, Maestro's Pixelation — "Loading" series navigates the balance between the simplicity of a common image and its complicated, refractory relationship to the political and social landscape it's burned within through a hyper-real lens. Caught between completion and pending materialization, his work draws attention to and challenges the consumptive circuit of "downloads to completion" by highlighting the state of imagery oversaturation and internal burnout, thus insinuating the frustration, anxiety, and ennui brought by digital processing to the political uncertainty that rested upon unfulfilled promises of a "fuller" reality.

Drawing from the language of Surrealism and the Indian symbolism of honor, tribute, and sacrifice, Annu Yadav's portrayal of women maps out the dichotomous experience and sexual trauma of women living under the male gaze as both an introspective re-examination and a confrontation of the engulfing patriarchal complex, while channeling creative energy into expressions of release and exaltation. Through a powerful juxtaposition of seductive yet obscenely arresting imagery of women and disfigured, mutilated body parts, her works evoke the impossible cohabitation of reality and surreality, envisioning a marriage of concealment and shame with unabashed shamelessness and raw ferocity.

Steeped in the vibrant essence of city life and her African American heritage, Sydney Wilson's sunset-hued, graffiti-styled paintings are bold, bombastic confrontations of everyday stagnicity that tempt the viewers, fueled by raw, untamed mythological energy, to embark on a wild expedition into the acidity of cultural landscapes. Hybridizing urban Black cultural realities with supernatural fantasies, grotesque mysticism and divine power, her portraits tear open the liminal realm where heart, veins, and souls pulsate in a single beat under the arrest of trauma-informed extrication, a moment when the inner saints and demons are both battled and embraced.

Raw, brutal, and cathartically violent, Sujetka's performance art situates bodily discomfort and pain as the locus of power and abuse, as its' excesses open up a threshold where the transgressive and the transcended corporeal force becomes a vehicle of radical political subversion. Retroactively enabling via disabling the source of activity, her somatic designs of protest confront the pain-inflicted body as the source of trauma, challenging the limitations of the figurative corporeal, and defy the political status quo of Western capitalism and the American Dream.

Blending experimental multimedia techniques and storytelling, Sherley Fan's work articulates the soft, dissonant plurality in contemporary diversity imperatives and how the disfigurement of a face could evoke intentional anonymity representative one and all, yet no one at the same time. By combining, recombining, and destructing normative narrative tropes and societal

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imperatives associated with identity and belonging, Fan explores the intimate topography individuals have to themselves in relation to the ecosystem of mores and expectations.

Teeming with botanical and entomological motifs, Bethany Yeap's scripted dreamscape maps out an unsettling internal world that tethers between the extremes of serenity and melancholy, transmutative vitality and decay. By conjuring the spectral, the gloom, and the mystical, she presents an enchanting version of reality, at once perilous and vexing, that undulates between the vortex of time and memory.

Through skillful manipulation of light and composition via isolation and fragmentation, Arielle Gray's photographs capture the strength and resilience of the black experience in America, weaving narratives of intimacy through what's left unseen. By accentuating the candor, regality, principle, and softness of the Black experience, she defies oppressive racial conceptions, instead celebrating the essential excellence embedded in Black Life.

Rui Kez's provocative male portraits redefine the gaze as an intimate process of interactivity, reliance, and spontaneity. Her portrayal of male anatomy in repose subsequently opens up the imaginary space where precedent and succeeding movements are suspended in a temporal moment of anticipation.

Jeremiah Morris' loose figurative compositions are a rhapsody of feral fantasy and untamed personal narratives in dedication to black expressivity that highlights the adrenaline of black culture within an American tempo. As much a self-examination as it is a cultural critique, his works externalize the internal struggle of stress and rage through exaggerated facial expressions in a playful touch.

Emma Jones' portrayal of distorted female corporeality calls to attention the societal expectation of the ideal body and the homogeneous standard of beauty that have disciplined the modern feminine psyche and bodily schema. In her work, the collapsed spaces that pressurize and envelop women's bodies alternatively give rise to a heterogeneity-infused form of mobility, reflecting the adaptive strategies women employ through their perennial malleability in response to the relentless social edicts of a scrutinizing mediascape.

Blending the age-old historical practice of bookbinding and papermaking with a revival of native calligraphic patterns, Cidney Cher's textile art is a love letter to her Persian and Arabic heritage and ancestral history. Her intricate designs, featuring whirling patterns of calcified bones and skeletal vertebrae, are imbued with a marblesque poeticism, evoking a quiet beauty in the muteness of color and the gradual dissolution of identity.

As conveyed through the nuanced and discerning eyes of an American transplant, Bangladeshi-born artist, Rawnak Rahman, explores the vicissitudes of power dynamics within the self-destructive and collective pursuit of control for the sake of ideological permeation. Inspired by the cult of Father Yod, and the infamously televised moment of Tom Cruise jumping

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ecstatically on the couch of Oprah Winfrey's set, Rahman explores a collapsed and time-distanciated social landscape, in which she re-frames and juxtaposes historical incidents critiquing the culture of the American cult, while simultaneously visually articulating the stubborn excesses of actualized, profound belief. Rahman invites viewers to re-image the self as internally looking outward as a means of escape, as a means of belonging, and as a means of understanding the figure as not an individual entity, but one as serving a purpose in numbers. Working on a large scale, she examines the acuity of historical influence of cults, and by extension the ecstatic architecture of social and psychological descent in the name of "elevation." "truth", and ultimately, acceptance.