

TIWANI CONTEMPORARY

In the Blood: Rita Alaoui, Virginia Chihota, Miranda Forrester, Heloisa Hariadne, Joy Labinjo, Claude Lawrence, Tessa Mars, Amanda Mushate, Emma Prempeh
27 June - 14 September 2024



Work featured: Joy Labinjo, *Sandcastle*, 2023 Oil on canvas | 180 x 200 cm | 70 7/8 x 78 3/4 in | JLA 137

Press release

Our group show, *In the Blood*, features represented, and associate artists inspired and committed to painting. This exhibition is a review of their approaches defining their representations of life and emotions, and how those impulses and reflections are translated gesturally and materially, in figuration and abstraction.

In the Upper Gallery we feature, **Virginia Chihota** who made an early segue in her practice from painting towards printmaking, specializing in serigraphy. Her interpretation of the process has created a methodology that subverts the logic of mass production to produce a limited series of unique works that share selected and personalized iconography and thoughts across the related works. Her compositions are transcribed from drawings to silkscreen stencils where selected colored inks are pushed through onto paper or linen surfaces that become layered and transformed over a period of time until resolution. A palimpsest of repeated action, thought and endeavor builds an immersive and dense imagery that creates a journey around a central question or topic of significance being addressed by the artist. Works on display include: *Munzvimbo yaunofamba nekudzoka wega I [in the space you walk and return alone I]*, (2022) and *Imomo murudo ndakapidiguka ndinzwisise [in that love I had to turn upside down to understand]*, (2022).

Miranda Forrester's gestural style hovers between drawing and painting in application. Her delicate observations of the body, domestic life and intimacy are sparsely defined and painted, alluding to a life in the process of defining itself. On occasion the compositions include queer popular cultural and historical references in the form of collaged photo-transfer elements across selected areas of the canvas, polythene or polycarbonate surface

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plane. The semi-bareness and transparency of Forrester's works manifest her intent to honestly represent her perspective and view on life and art as experienced by a queer, woman of color. The exhibition features the work, *Leda and Nemesis' Children* (2023). The work was created during a period of reflection on recently becoming a parent and her reading of the Greek mythological tale of *Leda and the Swan*.

Joy Labinjo celebrates the fullness of life in her works that are largely figurative and challenges the genre of portraiture, around who and what events are represented, and what it can tell us about community, society and history. Labinjo reviews the potential of vernacular, stock and historical archive photographs as her starting points towards building her paintings that share a sentiment, critique or response which is sometimes simultaneously personal, and culturally universal. On show is her work, *Sandcastle* (2023) produced during a period when the images nourished her need for togetherness and intimacy.

Heloisa Hariadne views her paintings as portraits of the intimate. They are emotional and philosophically driven landscapes formed from investigations of her memories and experiences. Hariadne's bold, mid and-large scale works feature representations of herself and thoughts merging within a fantastical botanical, meditative space; a spiritual retreat for breath, stillness and movement to imagine and manifest meaningful connections. We feature, *Pétalas que choraram sem conseguir respirar nos céus em busca de vida*, (Petals that cried without being able to breathe in the skies in search of life (2023).

In the Lower Gallery we have **Claude Lawrence** who is inspired by the spirit of improvisation and abstraction. He interprets the innovations and languages of Jazz and Abstract Expressionism to create striking renditions of movement, listening, memories and experiences with a strong attentiveness to color and form, drawn from his experiences of living and working between the United States and France. We include the work, *Untitled* (2021).

Rita Alaoui contemplates in her works the human relationship with nature. *Autumn #13* (2023) is part of an ongoing series that is focused on slowing time down to reify nature, that thrives with lesser human intervention. Her continued studies and numerous portraits of selected plants, enliven and extend her knowledge of their provenance, characteristics and medicinal properties, which ground and extend her connections to her immediate environment in France, her travels to other locations, and to her country Morocco and her matrilineal ancestry.

Emma Prempeh's *Solitude* (2022) is a portrait of a friend, and a tribute that poetically draws together an ode to the passing of time, pictorially and materially in the painting itself. In the foreground of a dark interior, Prempeh's friend sits comfortably, and fully prepared, with sunglasses in a ray of light that bathes her face, and highlights features of the rest of the room, including a clock. That light is captured in the application of schlag metal (composition gold leaf) that oxidizes and transforms over time, like memory and our recollections that become embellished or imperfect. The recurring motif of carpet from Prempeh's Grandmother's house is barely discernible, but omnipresent as a representation of the past, the outward gaze of her friend seemingly looking towards the future.

For **Amanda Mushate**, abstraction creates a space for her to take stock of her life and events, and the challenges that she faces as an ambitious young woman and parent, working and pursuing an artistic practice in a culturally male-dominated world in Zimbabwe. Mushate unpacks her observations through her expression of *ubuntu* an African continental, philosophical understanding of interconnectedness to a community and to humanity. Portrayed as a meandering pathway, Mushate delineates a journey thought that has no apparent beginning or end, and where she expresses her tensions, joys and questions on her canvases. Works in the exhibition include: *Ramangwana mukutamba [The future in play]*, (2023), *Ukuthandana [Loving each other]* (2023) and *Izifiso [Wishes]* (2023).

Tessa Mars depicts mythologies of her own invention to explore her Haitian identity and representations of connection to land and ancestors over time and space. In the show we feature, *The Water Is Waiting [For Us To Water Too]* (2023). It is unclear if whether their still or taken by the tide, but representations of Mars family are caught in an equally ambiguous body of water. Haiti is one of several Caribbean nations affected by climate emergency-induced rising sea levels. Mars poses the question in the face of the advancing water, are the island and her people literally and figuratively ready to swim together against the rising tide.