

Press Release
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Welancora Gallery presents *Le Déracinement (The Uprooting)*



On View

Thursday, January 26 - March 9, 2023
Welancora Gallery, 33 Herkimer Street Brooklyn, NY 11216
www.welancoragallery.com

Opening Reception
Thursday, January 26, 2023 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Masks are required.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Welancora Gallery is proud to present *Le Déracinement (The Uprooting)*, the gallery's first solo exhibition with Philadelphia-based artist Tamia Alston-Ward (b. 1999).

Through a suite of delicately toned metalpoint drawings and paintings on paper and wood panel, Alston-Ward explores the removal, decontextualization, and rebuilding of cultural and personal identity as an overarching theme in European colonization and American history. And through extensive research and her signature use of medium, mark-making and composition, Alston-Ward traces the conceptual basis of her source imagery while creating new contemporary narratives. Uprooting is the English translation for the French word *déracinement*, which describes the process of intentionally removing something or someone from their grounding environment or home.

The drawings and paintings in the exhibition are grouped into five categories, traditional African Art sketched by Alston-Ward during visits to the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia; Black mummies and other problematic figurines, genre scenes, self-portraiture and non-objective paintings on wood panel.

All of the work in *The Uprooting* is derived from Alston-Ward's extensive study of the traditional African Art collection at the Barnes Foundation - which contains works pilfered in the Scramble for Africa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; and, the overlapping history of Black mummies and other fetishes manufactured in the United States during the Jim Crow era. Alston-Ward recreates the exact likeness of these objects in the same materials (bronze, brass, and copper) that they are made of as an act of reverence for their intended function and as a means of understanding the historical context in which they physically exist and how they live within the consciousness of the broader society. It is befitting that the titles assigned to the drawings from the Barnes collection begin with the word Provenance.

The mummies and figurines are painted with egg tempera to reference the false narratives that these items are intended to perpetuate namely, happy domesticity among Black women in the service of others; Black life as performance; and, child promiscuity. Alston-Ward employs 24Kt gold and composition to recontextualize Black subjects and subject matter particularly in the drawings that depict genre scenes and in the detail and outward gaze of her self-portrait. The three non-objective works - each one painted in red, black and white - call on the viewer to develop their own perceptions free from any association with the Black body and all that it conjures. Yet the palette, which is the same used in the mummies, and the treatment of the paint on each panel points to the way that Alston-Ward utilizes medium to signal manufactured and simple references to Black life and her need to create contemporary narratives. In *Census #2 (2022)*, Alston-Ward captures the innocence of a moment in time when two young Black men are playing with a basketball. Through the use of gun and bullet metals, steel, lead, silver and nickel, Alston-Ward reminds us again of the sociopolitical context in which this image lives yet it is rendered with the care required of a contemporary sensibility.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Tamia Alston-Ward received a BFA in Illustration from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, PA in 2021. Ward is the recipient of the 2021 Fellowship Trust Award and the Conrad J. Linke Memorial Scholarship. Recent exhibitions include *Silver*, DFN Projects and New York Artists Equity, New York, New York 2021 and *A Good Habit Formed: Examples of the PAFA Drawing Culture*, Philadelphia, PA 2019. Alston-Ward lives and works in Philadelphia, PA.

Featured Image: *Census #2, 2022*, 24K gold, steel, lead, silver, nickel on prepared paper, 30 x 30 inches (76.2 x 76.2 cm)

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