

Press Release

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Reimagining Kinship

Opening reception: Thursday, May 8, 2025

6-8pm



Madjeen Isaac, *Wanderers and Sowers*, 2025

Welancora Gallery is pleased to present *Reimagining Kinship*, a group exhibition of work on view at our project space: 410 Jefferson Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11221. We will present works by Antonio Carreno, Chris Cook, King David, Grace Lynn Haynes, Madjeen Isaac, Julian Jamaal Jones, William Maxen, Otto Neals, Na'ye Perez, and Helen Evans Ramsaran. The opening reception will take place on May 8th from 6-8pm. Encompassing a wide array of mediums, this exhibition presents a more nuanced and expansive view of the concept of motherhood. Existing outside the boundaries of gender and biological family, the works on view meditate upon nature as a vital and nurturing source, memory, tradition, the circle of life, community, intimacy, mythologies and alternate realities. In allowing the difficulties of these relationships to peek through, these artists shed the idea of motherhood as an inherently western idealized image in search of a multilayered and authentic depiction.

About the Artists

Antonio Carreno (b. 1963, Santo Domingo) is an abstract painter influenced by Norman Lewis, Joan Miró, and Wassily Kandinsky. Finding freedom in abstraction, his dynamic brushstrokes and layered lines and forms are representative of his unique style which he calls "magical realism." The work is rich in color, symbolism, memory and history. It has an autobiographical quality, as he refers to his native Santo Domingo, one of the oldest cities in the world. The blend

of indigenous traditions and modern art styles has imprinted their influence on Carreno's work. Carreno has exhibited at Madelyn Jordon Fine Art (Scardale, NY), G.R. N'Namdi Contemporary (Miami, FL; Detroit, MI; Chicago, IL), Stella Jones Gallery (New Orleans, LA), Parish Gallery (Georgetown, D.C.), Dominican American Institute of Culture (Santo Domingo, DR), and Peg Alston Fine Art (New York, NY) among others. His work is in the collections of Arizona State University Art Museum, the Dominican American Institute of Culture, Museo de Arte Moderno Santo Domingo, and the Morris Museum.

Chris Cook (b. 1992, Brooklyn, NY) is a fine art photographer known for documenting the urban landscape in cities across the United States and abroad. Referring to himself as a “native tourist” of New York, Cook’s practice captures life in the city around him. Much of his practice is centered in developing a vast chronicle of the sociopolitical issues his generation faces, by creating photographs that preserve histories, record experiences and capture the human condition. The photograph on view does the same – in a familiar representation of a mother and child, their warm embrace provides a sense of comfort during a seemingly mundane commute. Recording these small moments brings light to the tender moments of everyday life. Cook’s creative process incorporates experimentation in traditional and new digital printmaking techniques – reflecting historical cycles of repetition and an ever-increasing technological impact on vision and perception. In 2020, Cook extensively documented scenes from the Black Lives Matter protests, capturing struggle, resilience, and hope on film and digital formats. All 160 of his Black Lives Matter photographs have been acquired by the Valentine Museum of Art.

King David (b. 1995, Brooklyn, NY) is based in Brooklyn, New York. Through the educational program Prep for Prep, David attended The Dalton School and Gettysburg College, where he studied Studio Arts. During his undergraduate years, David also studied abroad at the Leo Marchutz School of Painting and Drawing in Aix-en-Provence, France, which he credits as being especially powerful in his growth as an artist. His paintings are large abstractions where he interacts with the substrate through dynamic gestures. The works on view experiment with bold textures and colors to create great detail, with themes of family, Hinduism, and his Caribbean heritage. In embracing color, the chosen hues often relate back to his paternal homeland, Trinidad and Tobago, as a way of connecting with his late father. David has exhibited work at 447 SPACE, Chelsea, New York; 17 Frost Gallery, Williamsburg, New York; and Parasol Projects, Lower Manhattan, New York. His work has also been exhibited at art fairs such as The Other Art Fair Brooklyn, Brooklyn, New York; and Spectrum Miami, Miami, Florida.

Grace Lynne Haynes (b. 1992, California. Works in New Jersey.) is an artist investigating the relationship between painting, drawing, and storytelling through her usage of materials (pastel, pigment and chalk) to communicate elaborate fictional narratives of her own creation. Her pastel-colored drawings use Afrofuturistic aesthetics and science fiction references to create worldbuilding-driven narratives. Through envisioning a future centered on Black women, her worldbuilding becomes a way to address the sexism and racism of both past and present while simultaneously scripting new realities. Haynes received a BFA from the ArtCenter College of Design, and an MFA from Rutgers University. Her artwork has been featured on the cover of The New Yorker, and exhibited at Luce Gallery, Turin, Italy; Ontario Museum of History and Art,

Ontario, California; and New Image Art Gallery, West Hollywood, California. She was featured in Forbes's "30 Under 30" list for Art & Style in 2020.

Madjeen Issac (b. 1996. Based in Brooklyn, NY) is a first-generation Haitian-American whose practice is rooted in home, communality and belonging. Her paintings are nostalgic about the past and hopeful for the future, with vibrancy and warmth. Pulling from elements of her hometown Brooklyn and ancestral homeland Haiti, Isaac investigates liminal spaces, unpacking feelings of being in one place while simultaneously thinking about or longing for another. In her works on view, children and young adults look up to maternal figures who resemble mystical beings and comforting elders. Isaac received a BFA in Fine Art from the Fashion Institute of Technology, as well as an MA in Art + Edu & Community Practice from New York University. Her work has been exhibited in Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, New York; Swivel Gallery, Brooklyn, New York; Jenkins Johnson Projects Gallery, Brooklyn, New York; and the New York Art Center, Tribeca, New York. She's completed residencies and fellowships at Smack Mellon; The Laundromat Project, Brooklyn, New York; and Haiti Cultural Exchange, Brooklyn, New York. She has received the Dumbo Dozen Award, the Women of Distinction Award in Arts & Entertainment, and the City Artist Corps Grant.

Julian Jamaal Jones (b. 1992, Indianapolis, IN. Lives and works in Noblesville, IN.) is a multidisciplinary artist and educator. Jones memorializes Black culture by presenting fresh perspectives while presenting creative freedom within traditional landscapes. His unique practice communicates through the historical language of African American quilting tradition by implementing abstract forms and vibrant colors in his works to bypass the preconceptions and open conversations around his Black experience. The works on paper selected for this exhibition take inspiration from quilts sewn by his great-grandmother. Jones earned his BFA in Photography from Herron School of Art + Design, and his MFA in Photography from the Cranbrook Academy of Art. He has exhibited at Blue Spiral 1, Asheville, North Carolina; Soft Times Gallery, San Francisco, California; and Chilli Art Projects, London, United Kingdom. He has also participated in artist residencies at Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana; Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, Asheville, North Carolina; and The Stutz, Indianapolis, Indiana.

William Maxen (b. 1993, Waterbury, CT. Lives and works in Houston, TX) is a visual artist whose work explores the duality and ambivalences of the mixed-race experience. Pulling from past experiences, both personal and historical, the work engages the artist's connections with memory, environment, and belonging. His abstract paintings aim to blur the edges between identities and histories, taking inspiration from his own mixed-race experience. As the colors and lines bleed together, the separation between divisions dissolves. His ghostly abstractions on view recall formative childhood moments, whether tense or tender. Maxen received a BA in Illustration from Central Connecticut State University and an MFA in Art Studio at the University of California. He has exhibited artwork at Fridman Gallery, Lower East Side, New York; Untitled Art Miami Beach, Florida; Open Source, New Haven, Connecticut; and Felix Art Fair, Los Angeles, California.

Otto Neals (b. 1931, Lake City, South Carolina. Lives and works in Brooklyn, NY). He is largely self-taught, however, he briefly studied at the Brooklyn Museum with Isaac Soyer and at the Bob Blackburn Printmaking Workshop with Mohammed Khalil, Roberto DeLamonica and Krishna Reddy. He is proficient in many mediums including oils, watercolors, pastels and wood and stone carving. His drawing, *Mother & Child*, is another traditionally loving depiction of a maternal relationship. Neals was a founding member of the Harlem based group called the Weusi Artists which maintained a gallery called Nyumba Ya Sanaa. His works are in the collections of several notables including Harry Bellafonte, the Honorable Una Clarke, former N.Y.C. Council member, Randy Weston, Musician, Congressman John Lewis, Ruby Dee and Oprah Winfrey. His works are also included in the Ghana National Museum, The Studio Museum, and The Schomburg Library. He was commissioned by the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation to create a work of bronze, entitled *Peter and Willie*, for the Imagination Playground in Brooklyn's Prospect Park for which he was awarded the N.Y.C. Arts Commissions Award for Excellence in Design. Other commissions include ten bronze plaques for the "Harlem Walk of Fame" and a bronze work called *Discovery* for The Brooklyn Children Center. His works have been exhibited at Kenkeleba Gallery, The Studio Museum, The N.Y. State Museum in Albany, N.Y., The Herbert Johnson Museum at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. He has held solo exhibitions at The Schenectady Museum, Schenectady, N.Y., Benedict College, Columbia, S.C. and The Columbia Museum, Columbia, S.C.

Na'ye Perez (b. 1992, Los Angeles. Lives and works in Brooklyn.) is a multidisciplinary artist who – through paintings, drawings, and performance work – explores shared experiences of community and identity. His incorporation of collage, strong bright colors, and deep depth of field point to strong influences from pop culture and the surreal. With a focus on the Black and brown community, his work captures snapshots of tight knit, nurturing relationships in everyday scenes. Perez received a BFA in 2D Studies and Specialization from the University of Toledo and an MFA in Painting and Drawing from Pratt Institute. Perez has exhibited at NYC CULTURE Club, Tribeca, New York; Van Der Plas Gallery, East Village, New York; and Dinner Gallery, Chelsea, New York. He has received residencies from NEW WAVE, Pratt Institute, and The Shed. He has won the Pratt Circle Award and Outstanding Merit Award from Pratt Institute and has been a grant recipient of the Black Artist Fund.

Helen Evans Ramsaran (b. 1943, Bryan, TX. Lives and works in New York.) is a sculptor working in bronze. Ramsaran moved to New York City in 1973. Shortly thereafter (1978), she created a series of bronze relief sculptures called *Visual Tales* which are on view in this exhibition. This is her only series that is autobiographical in its statement and assumes the form of a visual narrative. The images and forms are somewhat calligraphic, thus posing some very delicate and challenging casting problems. In executing this body of work at the Johnson Atelier Technical Institute of Sculpture in Princeton, New Jersey, Ramsaran was able to perfect the technique of casting very delicate bronze sculptures. Ramsaran has exhibited nationally and internationally. In 1994, she had a solo exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem that traveled from the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia. Public collections include the Sheldon Museum, and the Mead Art Museum among others. Ramsaran splits her time between New York and Europe.

