

WELANCORA GALLERY

Press Release

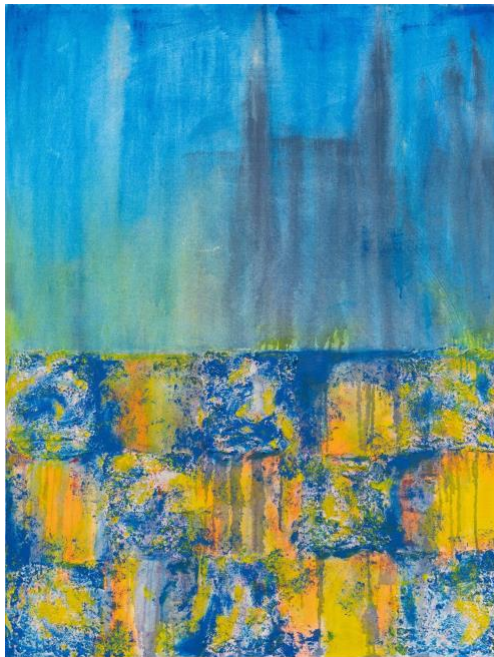
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*The Waters Knew the Language of the Flames*  
Opening Reception: Thursday, September 11, 2025  
6:00 pm–8:00 pm



Ryan Cosbert, *Land of Many Waters*, 2025

*Water and earth have long been present in my work, particularly through my use of sand. My mother and aunt would bring back sand from their travels to the Caribbean, storing it in bottles and containers. I held onto these for years, eventually incorporating them into the first two abstract paintings I ever shared publicly. This experience compelled me to address all four elements together, intertwining them with my heritage and personal history - Ryan Cosbert*

Welancora Gallery is pleased to present *The Waters Knew the Language of the Flames*, a solo exhibition of works by **Ryan Cosbert**, on view at 33 Herkimer Street in Brooklyn, NY. The opening reception will take place on Thursday, September 11, 2025 from 6–8pm.

The exhibition will remain on view through November 6, 2025.

Through her signature use of textured, orderly, geometric patterns made out of thick applications of acrylic paint mixed with sand, Cosbert explores elements from nature — water, fire, earth and air — through the lens of Caribbean history, identity, and generational resilience. The exhibition draws from the artist's Guyanese and Haitian heritage, translating both personal memory and ancestral storytelling into textured, abstract compositions that speak to transformation and migration.

Water and fire, often seen as opposing forces, are central to the narratives in Cosbert's paintings; one carrying histories across oceans, the other igniting change and renewal. The earth holds the weight of ancestral memory, while the wind carries the echoes of those who came before, whispering untold stories of survival and evolution. *The Waters Knew the Language of the Flames* brings these forces together in a spectacular way. Cosbert's body of work foregrounds the study of epigenetics, changes in gene expression due to generational trauma.

The Caribbean legacies Cosbert investigates are imprinted into her genetics, passing down deep rooted memories that once solely belonged to familial elders. In *Epigenetics No. 7 Anguish and Distress*, 2025, Cosbert balances the effects of ancestral trauma. She engulfs the left side of this diptych (*Part 1*) in a fire red color field, while organized swaths of blue and purple paint suggest histories passed down through strands of DNA. Despite past struggles and hardships creating these new impressions on a newborn's genes, this half of the diptych reflects how they can become resilient, adaptable, and nurture their sense of intuition.

The right half of this diptych (*Part 2*) uses a vibrant array of orange, red, and yellow to invoke the more volatile side of epigenetic changes: Inherited stress, trauma, and fear. By calling into question the way that epigenetic changes can affect future generations, Cosbert's paintings affirm the reality and persistence of ancestral trauma. Despite her acknowledgement of the increasing weight of these legacies as time goes on, Cosbert's work brings awareness to this phenomenon and invites reflection.



Ryan Cosbert, *Epigenetics No.7 Anguish and Distress Part 1 of 2*, 2025

Cosbert's work also pays close attention to Haiti's and Guyana's natural geographies, respectively. *Land of Many Waters*, 2025, is named for the English translation of the Amerindian word, "Guyana." The painting, a bifurcated canvas covered in a blue wash, brings to mind the country's many streams, rivers, and creeks. Other works pay homage to Indigenous and Caribbean figures who have dedicated their lives to environmental protection.

*An Ode to Wiener*, 2025, speaks to biologist Jean Wiener's efforts to protect Haitian marine life. Food insecurity and poverty have greatly contributed to an overfishing crisis, an unstable experience that too can breed ancestral traumas. Clusters of blue acrylic paint entangled with red creates a textured viewing experience to meditate upon the presumed abundance of Haiti's waters, as well as Wiener's work in establishing the first Marine Protected Areas.

*An Ode to Leroy Ignacio*, 2025, highlights conservationist Leroy Ignacio's leadership in the South Rupununi Conversation Society. As reflected in Cosbert's painting through tropical hues, Ignacio's work is centered on safeguarding the endangered red siskin and other forest animals in Guyana. As with inherited generational trauma, Cosbert's attention to the importance of environmental protection in Haiti and Guyana ponders upon the ways in which nature, history, and cultural memory are forever intertwined.

**About the Artist:**

Ryan Cosbert (b. 1998) is a Brooklyn-based visual artist whose abstract, textured compositions explore history, identity, and memory through the lens of her Guyanese and Haitian heritage. A graduate of the School of Visual Arts (BFA Fine Arts, 2021), Cosbert is known for her geometrically balanced works that often incorporate natural materials such as sand, referencing landscapes and migrations that have shaped generations. Her practice is deeply rooted in Caribbean history, familial storytelling, and an ongoing engagement with the elemental forces of earth, water, fire, and air—elements she views as carriers of ancestral memory and cultural resilience.

Cosbert has exhibited nationally and internationally, with solo presentations at Nicelle Beauchene Gallery (New York), Luce Gallery (Turin), UTA Artist Space (Atlanta), and Undercurrent (Brooklyn). Her work has also been featured in prominent art fairs, including 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, Dallas Art Fair, Felix Los Angeles, Untitled Miami Beach, and NADA Miami. Recent group exhibitions include *Migrating Sun Part 1* at Welancora Gallery, *Arrangements in Black* at Phillips Auction, and *The Shape of Things* at Swivel Saugerties. She is recognized as a Barnes Foundation Scholarship Grantee (2021) and recipient of the Chairman's Merit Award (2017–2021).

In support of the exhibition, Ryan will join curator and writer Grace Aneiza Ali in a public conversation that delves into the intersections of art, identity, and cultural legacy.