*Where cloudy waters collide…*

6 May – 4 June 2022

Private View | Thursday 5 May 2022 | 6-8 pm

**MERIKOKEB BERHANU
NASIM HANTEHZADEH
ISAAC JULIEN**

**ABDOULAYE KONATÉ
TAMAR MASON
JOSÉ VERA MATOS
ALYINA ZAIDI**

*One way ashore, a thousand channels* (Édouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation*, p3)

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is pleased to present *Where cloudy waters collide…*, an exhibition that brings together works by Merikokeb Berhanu, Nasim Hantehzadeh, Isaac Julien, Abdoulaye Konaté, Tamar Mason, José Vera Matos, and Alyina Zaidi, each of whom explores notions of relation, opacity, and rootedness. Through subverting empirical cartography in favour of mapping the ‘in-between’ – the body and the mind, the mythological and the ritualistic, the ‘illicit’ and the invisible – they interrogate inter-cultural exchanges, reimagining and deliberately questioning official accounts of the world.

Deriving its title from Derek Walcott’s epic poem *Omeros* (1990), which explores humanity’s connection to place, history and nature, **Isaac Julien’s** *Paradise Omeros* (2002), expands on this premise, delving deep into the socio-political landscape of people of the Caribbean diaspora. The exhibition will present photographic works taken during the making of the film; rather than films stills, each was shot separately on a medium format camera. Capturing the idyllic scenery of St. Lucia and using the metaphor of the sea as a space for cross-cultural exchange, the series looks at the hybrid mental states that arise from living between cultures.

This cultural fluidity is equally of importance to **Nasim Hantehzadeh**. Contemplating the experience of returning to the United States – her country of birth – after being raised in Iran until early adulthood, Hantezadeh’s deeply personal works create moving narratives examining the liminal spaces that coalesce around identity, personhood, sexuality, race and gender.

Also traversing this landscape of cultural integration is **Merikokeb Berhanu**, who is including two works made both prior and after her relocation in 2017 from Ethiopia to the United States. Capturing the feelings of her varied experiences of living in these two distinct countries, Berhanu creates works that echo subterranean forms, hinting at the tension between nature and urbanity and how this dichotomy feeds into her own experiences of emigration.

One of the most important artists of his generation, **Abdoulaye Konaté’s** monumental textile works push the assemblage medium to its extreme, melding small pieces of dyed cotton fabrics together to form large and richly detailed canvases. *Le papillon jaune* (2016) uses the fragility of the butterfly to comment on the insecurity of West Africa’s political structure, whilst at the same time instilling these countries with the strength and ability to metamorphose and generate systems that augment the lives of their communities.

Transcribing Édouard Glissant’s *The Poetics of Relation* into carefully composed syntactic structures, mimicking the layout of island masses or organic forms, **José Vera Matos’s** *A World in Relation* (2020) questions how cultural identities are constructed. In these compositions he explores the formal rigidity of the text, now reconfigured as roots expanding out and encountering one another, seeking cross-societal connections.

**Alyina Zaidi** creates works grounded in her own experiences of growing up in Kashmir. The ethereal dreamscapes of her richly coloured canvases reflect on her cross-cultural background, her memories, and the environments that have shaped her. The fluctuation that permeates her painted scenes fosters a more fluid form of cartography, one that integrates multiple perspectives.

Also drawing inspiration from her country of birth, **Tamar Mason’s** practice speaks to the complex geography and history of South Africa, incorporating personal experiences as well as broader cultural narratives into her work. They depict silhouetted elongated figures, foregrounding spherical forms that allude to the celestial. The black material is reminiscent of the suits worn by those in positions of power, whilst the intricate embroidery on the surface embellishes the work with colour and tradition, posing questions about stereotypes associated with gender, domesticity, and cultural heritage.

About the artists:

**Merikokeb Berhanu** (b. 1977, Addis Ababa) graduated from the Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design in 2002. In 2017 she moved to Maryland, USA. Since her move to the US, Berhanu’s visual language has developed to incorporate depictions of the new, consumerists society she found herself in and its catastrophic impact on the environment. Her paintings are multitudinous in meaning, speaking to the experience of a migrant assimilating into a foreign culture, to the universality of life and nature, and they also stand as testament to her sophisticated understanding of colour and composition. Berhanu is part of Cecilia Alemani’s *Milk of Dreams* presentation at this year’s Venice Biennale.

**Nasim Hantehzadeh** (b. 1988, Stillwater, OK) was raised in Iran and now lives in Los Angeles, CA. She holds a BA from Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran (2010), a BFA from The School of Art Institute Chicago, IL (2013), and an MFA from University of California, LA (2018). Recent solo presentations include The Pit, LA, at Frieze LA (2022); Nina Johnson, Miami, at NADA Miami (2021) and her solo exhibition *Orgasmic,* Nina Johnson, Miami (2021). Hantehzadeh was the recipient of the Monson Arts Fellowship (2021), the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2019), and the UCLA Art Dept Scholarship (2017), and has participated in residencies at MacDowell, Peterborough, NH, and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine. Her work is in the Collections of Frederick R Weisman Art Foundation; Jorge Perez, Miami; Lynda and Stewart Resnick; Colección Diéresis, Guadalajara, Mexico; and Isabel and Agustín Coppel Collection (CIAC), Mexico.

**Isaac Julien** (b. 1960, UK), lives and works between London and California. Julien received his BA from Central St Martins School of Art (1984) and completed his post-doctoral studies at Les Entrepreneurs de L’Audiovisuel Européen, Brussels, Belgium. Recent solo and group exhibitions include *Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art 1950s – NOW*, Tate Britain (2022); *Isaac Julien: Western Union: Small Boats,*Neuberger Museum, New York (2020); *Masculinities: Liberation through Photography*​, Barbican Art Gallery, London, (2020); *Baltimore*at the Baltimore Museum of Art (2019-2020); *Isaac Julien: Frederick Douglass: Lessons of the Hour*, ​SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah (2019; *Looking for Langston*at Tate Britain (2019); *Playtime*at LACMA (2019); *Black Refractions: Highlights from the Studio Museum in Harlem*at the Gibbes Museum (2019). Julien directed a focal series of readings and performances for *All the World's Futures*, the main exhibition of the 56th Venice Biennale (2015), curated by Okwui Enwezor.

**Abdoulaye Konaté** (b. Diré Mali, 1953) lives and works in Bamako, Mali. Konaté studied painting at the Institut National des Arts, Bamako, and later went on to attend the Instituto Superior de Arte Havana, Cuba. Konaté’s recent solo exhibitions include, *Lune Bleue*, Espace Dominique Bagouet, Montpellier (2021); *Abdoulaye Konaté:* *The Diffusion of Infinite Things*, Standing Pine, Nagoya, Japan (2021); *Couleurs d’âme*, Blain Southern New York, (2020). Group shows include *Threads*, Duende Art Projects, Zwartzusters Monastery, Antwerp (2021); *Global(e) Resistance*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2020); *Africa Universe*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan and Lugano (2019). Konaté’s work is also part of the collections of Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Smithsonian Museum, Washington; and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, among many others.

**Tamar Mason** (b. 1966, Johannesburg) gained her BA from the University of South Africa (1993). Encompassing individual and collective projects, major community commissions include the 35-metre wall hanging for Mpumalanga Legislature chamber, documenting the history and prehistory of the province; and 11 large-scale panels for the Origins Centre, Wits University, which tell the story of the Bushmen or San over 30,000 years in Southern Africa. Exhibitions include *An Odyssey in Print: Adventures in the Smithsonian Libraries*, National Museum of American History, Washington, DC; Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg; *Rijswijk Textile Biennial*, Museum Rijswijk, The Netherlands; Museum Africa, Johannesburg and Pretoria Art Gallery and Museum, Pretoria. Collections include The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, Port Elizabeth; Wits Art Museum, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg; University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, and Mpumalanga Legislature Collection, Mbombela.

**José Vera Matos** (b. 1981) lives and works in Lima, Peru. He studied at the Institute of Visual Arts Edith Sachs, and at Escuela Nacional Superior Autónoma de Bellas Artes del Perú. Recent solo exhibitions include Frieze London, 80m2 Livia Benavides; Galerie Nordenhake, Stockholm (2021); Galerie Nordenhake, Mexico City (2019); Casa Museo J.C. Mariátegui, Lima (2018); Galería Arroniz, Mexico City; and Museo Mario Testino (MATE), Lima (2016). Selected group exhibitions include Fondation Cartier, Paris (2018); Collection Hochschild, Sala Alcala, Madrid (2017); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen (2016); Palais de Glace, Buenos Aires (2016); Delfina Foundation, London (2015); and El Museo del Barrio, New York (2013). Vera Matos’s work is part of the collections of Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen; Hochschild Collection, Lima; and Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid.

**Alyina Zaidi** (b. 1995, New Delhi), lives and works in London. Zaidi earned her BA at Mount Holyoke College, MA, and her MA Painting from Royal College of Art, London. Recent exhibitions include Newchild Gallery, Antwerp; Indigo + Madder, London; White Cube, London (online); MAPA Fine Art, The Netherlands; and Royal College of Art at Cromwell Place, London.