

LEILA HELLER.

Leila Heller is pleased to announce "Land of Honey" curated by Emann Odufu*, open in New York May 5th to June 3rd, 2023, and featuring the work of Nancy Baker Cahill, William Buchina, Melis Buyruk, Naeemeh Kazemi, Tim Kent, Chelsea Odufu, and Samuel Stabler.

"Land of Honey" is a show focused on ideas that are commodified and then sold to the general population about what it means to be a human in modern society. The title stems from the biblical term "Land of Milk and Honey". The idea of sold fantasies is tracked through many disparate threads across the works of the show's artists. The title references the ever-elusive land of honey, opportunities, and abundance that the US and many other destinations across the Americas were described as to European immigrants in the early 1900s. However, this connection can also be jettisoned into the present day, where a new generation of immigrants are emigrating to places around the world like New York City or, in more current times, commercial centers such as Dubai, chasing this ever-elusive land of honey and the symbols of prosperity associated with them.

The idea of dreams sold to maintain our society and the sometimes-illusory promise of abundance and prosperity associated with them is at the show's core. Each of the artworks in the exhibition exists within the spectacle of this collective dream of the modern human experience, participating in it yet being aware of the limitations and dangers of participating only from within this limited framework. In various ways, the artists in the show are mirroring the conditions of present times but using some form of abstraction or manipulation of material, whether conceptual or physical, digital or analog, to pierce the veil of this dream state into territories that are less easy to discuss in today's society.

**Emann Odufu is a filmmaker, art and culture critic and curator. Born and raised in Newark, NJ, but of Guyanese and Nigerian descent, he aims to make fine art accessible to demographics typically excluded from conversations about fine art. Over the past decade, by pursuing creative endeavors in film, working in the studio of fine artist Hank Willis Thomas, and being exposed to the national infrastructure of art institutions and organizations, he has developed a unique perspective on art's role for contemporary society. Most recently, Emann has curated a solo show of German contemporary artist Anselm Reyle at MoCA Westport. Last year he curated a solo show of artist Samuel Stabler at the National Arts Club in NYC.*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Nancy Baker Cahill is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist whose hybrid practice focuses on systemic power, consciousness, and the human body. She is the Founder and Artistic Director of 4th Wall, a free AR public art platform exploring site interventions, resistance and inclusive creative expression. Her work has been exhibited internationally at museums and galleries, including Francisco Carolinum Linz, The Hermitage, The Buk-Seoul Museum of Art (SEMA), Kunsthalle Zürich, Honor Fraser Gallery, and Vellum LA. In 2022, she was one of two featured artists in the Luma Foundation's Elevation 1049 Biennial in Switzerland. Her work was featured in the Immersive Main Competition at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival and was exhibited on 90 screens in Times Square for the entire month of July as part of the Midnight Moments Program. She is a 2022 LACMA Art and Tech Grant recipient. Her work is held in the collection of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and will be part of the Whitney Museum of Art's Artport collection with a forthcoming project.

Melis Buyruk is a Turkish artist born in Golcuk in 1984. Her large-scale floral ceramic sculptures depart from contained, categorical forms of pottery, and celebrates the traditionally feminized discipline. Buyruk graduated from the Ceramic Department of the Faculty of Fine Arts at Selcuk University in 2007, and has exhibited across Turkey.

William Buchina's acrylic and ink paintings serve both to reveal and to obscure their own complex meanings. The works share visual similarities with Victorian etchings or even contemporary graphic novels, but close observation of their details reveal Buchina's Surrealist leanings. He creates dystopian narrative scenes, culling imagery from innumerable sources, building satirical mash-ups. The process of finding the disparate source material is as significant to Buchina's art making as actually applying materials to canvas. At the intersection of his collection of found objects, old and new,

LEILA HELLER.

Buchina builds layered compositions that challenge both the mind and the eye. Many of the faces in the crowd are obscured by masks, signs, or abstract forms, heightening the sense of mystery. Buchina draws inspiration from the rituals of religious ceremony and fraternal orders, adapting their gestures and symbols to his own surreal scenes. Though the diverse imagery coheres into a formally powerful and intriguing whole, no strict narrative is formed within Buchina's compositions; he leaves enough ambiguity for the viewer to infuse the work with their own meaning.

Naeemeh Kazemi (b.1981, Tehran, Iran) is a visual artist who has an MA in Painting from Alzahra University. She has been working as a professional artist in Iran since 2002. Predominately a sculptor, Kazemi began painting in 2020 when the lockdown started since she could not get to her studio. She worked on these magical canvases in her one bedroom apartment in Iran, which helped her escape the confinement of quarantine and transported her to fantastical places. Living in Iran, Kazemi has had to take creative approaches to her meanings through symbols, so as to not get in trouble with the Iranian government. Her themes of environmental and virus anxiety, feminism, and humanity are disguised in her enchanting paintings through tokens and motifs of the natural world, classical paintings, and quotidian objects.

Tim Kent is an internationally exhibiting artist based between New York, NY and Berlin, Germany. His professional practice aims to address narratives based around the mechanisms of history and personal memory, both of which are produced by the visual structures of power that inform our experience. He has also appeared in a wide range of solo and group exhibitions and projects including at: Hollis Taggart, New York; Hearst Foundation, New York; Whitney Museum; Kunstverein Worms DE; ART@SAP Foundation DE; The National Arts Club, New York; Centotto Galleria, Brooklyn; Slag Gallery, New York; Factory Fresh, Brooklyn; Brandt Gallery, Amsterdam; Moncrieff-ray Gallery, London; Queen Street Gallery, Chichester, UK. Mr. Kent earned an MA Visual Art, University of Sussex at West Dean College, West Dean, UK where he was awarded the Vice Chancellor's Award for Excellence in a Masters Thesis; an MFA Post Graduate Diploma in Painting, West Dean College, West Dean, UK; and a BA Art History/Hunter College, City University of New York, NY. He was born in Canada to newly immigrated English and Turkish parents, before immigrating to the USA in 1990.

Chelsea Odufu is a first-generation Nigerian and Guyanese American Filmmaker and a multi-disciplinary artist hailing from Newark, New Jersey that works across narrative, experimental film, video art, installation, and photography. She is deeply concerned with how traditional aspects of African and Caribbean culture are being preserved in the face of urbanization and globalization. Her work also examines the ways in which culture, religion, and geographic location influence the way different ethnic identities are formed and evolve. Odufu's work juxtaposes afro-futuristic imagery, archival footage, as well as journalistic aesthetics to demystify the stigmas typically connected to BIPOC identities. Her work is visually striking, thought provoking yet it is clear her process comes to her very intuitively. Chelsea Odufu was also one of twelve artists selected in 2021 for Kehinde Wiley's Black Rock Senegal Residency in Dakar. She has exhibited her work at the Dakar Biennial, Alabama Contemporary Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary African Diasporic Art, and the A&A Hillyer Gallery in DC. She is apart upcoming group shows at the Seattle Art Museum as well as a show at the Something Video Gallery in Ivory Coast in 2023. Her work has been featured in the New York Times, Huffington Post to name a few.

Samuel Stabler is known for his contemporary take on Old Master paintings. The artist recreates these masterworks in highly detailed pen-and-ink drawings, which he then obscures with streaks of neon yellow, adding a contemporary update to centuries-old masterpieces. Sourcing images from the internet, he also creates meticulous cut-outs, transforming once familiar subjects into abstract webs of line and contour. His source images range from Dutch floral still life paintings to cultural scenes, such as celebrity athletes and film stills. "Old Masters used to paint the masters before them," he has said. "The internet age has allowed me to have this huge access to information, so I'm appropriating it in the way that makes sense to me now." Samuel Stabler (b. 1984, Atlanta, GA) received his BFA from the University of Georgia, Athens and his MFA from Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design, London. His recent exhibitions include MoCa Westport, Georgia Museum of Art, Howards Gallery (Athens, GA), Albany Museum of Art (Albany, GA), Art on Paper NY, KWADRAT (Berlin), Beutler Fine Arts (Paris), and Pulse Art Fair (NY & Miami). He has exhibited throughout the United States and internationally. He lives and works in Athens, GA.