

SPIRIT & FLESH

July 8 - October 2, 2021

/ 1150 25th St, Building B San Francisco, CA 94107

Open Thursday - Saturday, 11am-6pm

Sydney Cain / Hung-Lun Chen / Ricki Dwyer / Charles Lee / Gregory Rick /

Hannah Waiters & Narges Poursadeqi

Curated by Sam Vernon



"Deep within the spirit and flesh of my being, the fretting breath of Ancestor guides the burning faith. Sacred are the visions ingrained like gleaming sermons, preached far beyond the face of my nights. Give me the courage to know the things of life, that I may be worthy of my place. Above all, teach me to share the gifts." – John Outterbridge

Far removed from the dogmatic rigidity of rationalism's calculations dichotomizing thought and emotional feeling, this group of artists deal in corporality and vernacularity. *Spirit and Flesh* celebrates the process of self-fashioning: a recognition of art as an extension-expression of oneself, one's labor, one's memories and inner monologue, one's spiritual disposition, one's transition and transformation.

Imagine an artist who wakes up to themselves, and by their own action, frees themselves.

In some ways, you're free when you can walk away. You're free from any type of relationship or system when you understand that you're not being ruled by unconscious attachments and desires.

Perhaps an artist's work is truly powerful when it is becoming more distinctive, is shedding the layers of expectation and starting to say, "No. I don't want that."

It's like, when you experience a trauma, you go through something extremely difficult. You understand something deep about life that other people might not understand, and it's fine. It's also the grace of growing, maturing. The idea of something like success (in art and life): we are encouraged to think it looks a certain way. Success takes a long time and it doesn't just come to you — you have to investigate it. You have to open your eyes to all of the ways you have been taught what success is (in art and life) and awaken to the fact that it's up to you to choose what it is.

So how are we more able to access art's depth and freedom, in spirit and flesh?

This show is invested in the emergence of seven artists who actively make themselves whole through making.

– Sam Vernon

Curated by Sam Vernon, *Spirit & Flesh* is the third in a series of exhibitions at /, each organized by an independent Bay Area-based curator. *Spirit & Flesh* will be accompanied by a limited-edition catalogue published for the occasion, featuring an essay by Zoé Samudzi.

Sydney Cain was born and raised in San Francisco, CA. Utilizing graphite, powdered metals, printmaking, and chalk as transcendent emblems for myth-making, her work offers reverent narratives that reveal the power of remembrance and spiritual evolution within “unseen” Black afterlives. Cain's work has been exhibited at Betti Ono, Ashara Ekundayo Gallery, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco Arts Commission, and the African American Arts and Culture Complex. Forthcoming exhibits include *Refutations* at the Museum of the African Diaspora and *Mothership: Voyage into Afrofuturism* at the Oakland Museum of California. Cain is currently represented by Rena Bransten Gallery.

Hung-Lun Chen was born in 1984 in Taipei, Taiwan. He now lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. He received his M.F.A. in sculpture from Yale University and B.S. in biotechnology from California Polytechnic University, Pomona. His practice re-interprets the relationship between tradition and modernity. Chen employs a wide variety of mediums to discern the constant negotiation between folklore belief systems and late-capitalist society. Using a variety of modern and traditional object-making techniques, Chen uses the physicality and materiality of objects as vessels for gestures that are symbolic and functional. In recent years, Chen's work has been exhibited at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan (2017), Newburgh Artist in Vacancy, NY (2018), and Missouri State University, Springfield (2018).

Ricki Dwyer is an artist and educator living in San Francisco, California. Ricki is currently holding a studio fellowship with UC Berkeley and is a 2021 Facebook Artist In Residence. They

received their undergraduate degree from Savannah College of Art and Design and an MFA from UC Berkeley. They have exhibited with Anglim Gilbert, Eleanor Harwood, Guerrero Gallery, and the Berkeley Art Museum. They have been artist in residence with Recology San Francisco, Jupiter Woods Gallery London, The Textile Arts Center New York, and The White Page Gallery Minneapolis. They have been recipient of the NEA Grant, Eisner Prize, Murphy and Cadogan Contemporary Art Award, and the Queer Cultural Center's Emerging Scholar Award.

Charles Lee (b. 1983, Honolulu) is an MFA Candidate in Fine Art at California College of the Arts in San Francisco. Lee holds a BA in Business Management and Marketing from Bowie State University. Lee's work subverts the narrative that Black culture is a monolith by creating authentic narratives that address issues of reclamation, identity, family, class, authorship, othering and highlights the existence of subcultures within the Black American diaspora. His work seeks to de-mystify the act of being Black by showing the nuance of contemporary Black life. Lee is a recipient of Pabst Blue Ribbon's Open Door Grant 2021 and has exhibited in San Francisco. His work has also been published by Oxford University Press, KQED, Lenscratch, and in PhotoFilmic JRNL 7.

Gregory Rick was born in 1981 and grew up in South Minneapolis. Rick received his BFA from CCA and is currently pursuing his MFA in art practice at Stanford University. Developing a historical imagination, and a fondness for drawing stories, Rick collapses history while confronting personal trauma. Rick's works exist as reflections of his personal experience while being in dialogue with the wider world. Rick has received the Combat Infantry Badge, the Yamaguchi printmaking award, the Nathan Oliviera fellowship, and the Jack K. and Gertrude Murphy Award and has shown in museums and galleries in both Minneapolis and California.

Hannah Waiters is a Bay Area-based Black visual researcher and conceptual artist. Her conceptual material art practice interests include museum studies, Black Atlantic philosophy, historical phenomenology in art history, and historical materialism. She earned her MFA in Fine Arts and MA in Visual & Critical Studies at the California College of the Arts. Waiters is currently a collections fellow in Contemporary & American art at the de Young museum, extending her graduate studies research on preserving Black conceptualist erasure in relation to gentrification's local dynamics. Themes and aesthetics of both Black Atlantic philosophy and museum studies here enlarge how we think about exhibitions and, more broadly, archival/institutional displacements that marginalize local landscapes and perpetuate the erasure of larger local socio-cultural narratives.

Narges Poursadeqi was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. She started photography and video production at the Iranian Youth Cinema Society and continued studying in Fine Art at The University of California Berkeley and California College of the Arts. Her work investigates the intersection of culture, memory, and narrative, and how each affects the other. Poursadeqi's practice is derived from political events, culture, and religion. She works with archived photos, videos, and texts.

Her role as a collector and storyteller allows her to create contemporary work that responds to political events, cultural movements, and contemporary religious discourse. The work exists in the process of finding the perfect casing for each story.

Sam Vernon earned her MFA in Painting/Printmaking from Yale University in 2015 and her BFA from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 2009. Her installations combine xerox collages, photographs, paintings and sculptural components in an exploration of personal narrative, identity and historical memory. Sam teaches in the Printmedia and Graduate Fine Arts program as an Assistant Professor at California College of the Arts (CCA) and Bard College as a Visiting Assistant Professor in Studio Arts.

Zoé Samudzi is an art writer whose work has appeared in *Art in America*, *The New Republic*, *SSENSE*, *The New Inquiry*, *Verso*, and other places, and she is a contributing writer for *Jewish Currents*. She has a PhD in Medical Sociology from the University of California, San Francisco where she researched German imperialism, biomedicine, and the Ovaherero & Nama genocide. Other research interests include visual ethnography and politics of seeing/witnessing, the science of race-making, genocide memory, disposability, and the repatriation of art and human remains.

Image: Sydney Cain, *Ark of Bones, pt 1.*, 2021
Acrylic, pigment, graphite and pastel on wood
48 x 60 in
Courtesy of the artist and Rena Bransten Gallery