

Firelei Báez: To See Beyond

May 18 through August 19, 2018

Curated by Steven Matijcio; Organized by the Contemporary Arts Center

ARTIST(S) Firelei Báez

"There's a fluidity of color, of race, in the Caribbean ... In America, you're black." Caribbean-born, Brooklyn-based artist Firelei Báez navigates a broad spectrum of color, race and identity in her first Ohio exhibition. Born in the Dominican Republic to Dominican and Haitian parents, she immigrated to the United States in 1990 and was increasingly troubled by the restraints of her ethnicity wedged within confining American designations. To re-animate the beautiful complexity of being Afro-Latina and invite a greater congregation of cultural traditions, Báez creates intricate paintings, murals, sculpture and works on paper that brim with vibrant patterns and political agency.

Aiming to re-open perceptions with enchanted worlds of colorful avatars, she explains, "I try to disrupt the current system of social categorization through the creation of characters that refuse definition. As more people become multiracial, skin tone is no longer a sufficient signifier." With a self-proclaimed interest in the craft and form traditionally thought of as "women's work" (i.e. textiles, jewelry, ceramics), she channels the history of ornamentation and fashion as acts of resistance among women of the African Diaspora. In concert with added dimensions of anthropology, folklore, science fiction and mythology, Báez's art offers a fantastical vision within increasingly diverse societies. This exhibition will marry important past works with a number of recent works and a kaleidoscopic new wall painting.