

**CENTRAL FINE**  
**VIKTOR EL-SAIEH. TIM-TIM.**  
**JANUARY 15<sup>TH</sup> - FEBRUARY 15<sup>TH</sup>**

“The beauty of the sovereign people is clear.”

*TIM-TIM*, Viktor El-Saieh’s fourth solo presentation at CENTRAL FINE reflects on mythologies of nation-building, folklore, and sovereign identity in Haiti, the land of many mountains.

Like English knock-knock jokes, *Tim-Tim* also known as *Krik-Krak* is a Haitian folkloric practice that combines call-and-response storytelling, and riddle-making, among other activities. It often involves groups of children or students surrounding an elder who engages the audience in drawn-out stories addressing mythologies, or one-line riddles that deal with casual topics. Taking *Tim-Tim* structure as a departure point, El-Saieh’s works could be thought of as linguistic apparatuses that reveal what emerges beyond repression.

By questioning the boundaries between nation and state, El-Saieh renders visions of his country which convey both timelessness and urgency. Haiti’s dialectical exchange between the symbolic and the real, could be understood in El-Saieh’s work as a complex system where “Indivisible family property, the Kreyol language, the forms of spirituality encapsulated in Vodou, the calendar and rhythm of communal life, leisure, dance, music are dimensions of national life controlled by the decisions of the sovereign people.”

El-Saieh’s work considers politics, and the codification of Haitian painting strategies, proposing a criticism on political impositions, through a set of formal devices. In his paintings, the figure and the grid contend with one another, sometimes holding or unraveling their *raison d’être*. The grid, a modernist symbol that indicates order (in both material and social fields) was exhaustively investigated in the structuralist and modernist sphere. In *TIM-TIM* El-Saieh starts a multi-layered game that aims to challenge normative calcifications, by proposing elasticity as an option to the suffocation of organizing mechanisms. A brushstroke breaks into pattern, particles of light float over a landscape, bathing an army, a mermaid, and a tourist, in a cacophony of critical comebacks.

One could say that beneath the veil of the state, lies a personal nation —cast in the dye of self-actualization and mythology; driven by the idea that the scope of possibility exceeds the limits and agendas set on reality.

**Viktor El-Saieh** (b. Port-Au-Prince, 1988) has presented his work internationally. Most recently, his work was included in documenta 15<sup>th</sup>, Kassel; 2022; Luhring Augustine, Chelsea, New York, 2022; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami 2022; The Perez Art Museum Miami 2020-2023; among other venues.

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Currently, El-Saieh's work can be seen at the Perez Art Museum Miami and at the Miami World Center Public Art Program, in Downtown Miami