

Akea Brionne

Janus

June 17 – July, 29, 2023

CPM is pleased to announce its upcoming exhibition of new works by **Akea Brionne**, entitled *Janus*. This is the artist's first solo show with the gallery.

In Roman mythology, Janus was the god of doors, gates, and transitions and is often depicted with two faces—one looking towards the past and one towards the future. The works in this show cull motifs from western art history while using artificial intelligence technology to blur the lines between painting, photography, tapestry, and low relief sculpture.

The long wall of the gallery will display a group of five 60 x 48 inch self-portraits. To create these portraits, Brionne takes photographs of herself and distorts them by supplying text prompts to an AI algorithm of her design, searching for the “right words” to describe herself as a person, an Afro-Creole woman, and an artist in the world. The AI's mutations warp the figures and environments so greatly that each painting looks like a different person. Collectively, the self-portraits problematize the intelligibility of racial categories, the integrity of the body, and the boundary between figure and ground. Brionne has the resulting images digitally woven on jacquard tapestry, then she stretches them around canvas and adorns them with mixed media, yarn, and multi-colored crystals that shimmer as the viewer moves around the work.

The front room will display a grid of six 33 x 29 inch flower works, also created using printed and hand-jeweled jacquard. Brionne presents the flowers flatly on blank backgrounds and lines them with faux black fur. These pieces serve as a symbolic counterpoint to the more naturalistic depictions of plants in the backgrounds of her self-portraits. These works pose the potency of flowers in medicine and mind-altering hallucinogenic experiences against AI's distortions of reality and personhood.

The back room of the gallery will display a rotating mobile that references Matisse's seminal work *The Dance*, 1910. In Brionne's piece, created over a century after the original, she has replaced Matisse's figures with life-size representations of her own body, printed on jacquard fabric, hand-jeweled, and stuffed with poly-fil, a material used to pad dolls. This installation is located two blocks from the Marlborough apartments—now federally-subsidized senior living, once the home of the Cohn collection and dozens of Matisse paintings.

There will be two “Patchwork” pieces, each 48 x 51 inches, comprised of two adjoining panels. These abstract works embed glimpses of printed jacquard images taken from Brionne's family archives into a field of quilted, multi-colored, and multi-textured fabrics.

In this exhibition, Brionne probes how AI technology can be used to mine, navigate, construct, and reconstruct identity using a visual repository of the past. The works explore what AI can do and expose what it cannot do, seeking in its “unhuman-ness” the possibility of a new, more human concept of identity.

Akea Brionne (b.1996) is an interdisciplinary researcher and artist, exploring the relationship between post-colonial creole identity and social geography. Working in lens-based media and textiles, the work analyzes the impact of colonial systems on cultural storytelling, memory, assimilation, and the performance of black identity in America. Her work is in public collections and archives including the Baltimore Museum of Art, Wellin Museum of Art, University of Maryland College Park, Archive of Documentary Arts, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University, Los Angeles Center for Digital Art, and the Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collection. Brionne is originally from New Orleans, Louisiana and currently lives and works between Detroit, Michigan and Baltimore, Maryland.