

You 3.2 men play too much

Raynes Birkbeck

September 30 - November 4, 2023

Opening event with readings by Eburn A Sodipo, Juan de Salas and Martyn Reyes

Curated by Bea Ortega Botas and Leto Ybarra

The artist, poet and self-taught writer Raynes Birkbeck (Bronx, New York, 1956) draws scenes in which science fiction is strongly intertwined with environmental issues, war, the political present, sexuality and the interpersonal relationships they generate. In each of his drawings, and the accompanying texts he writes on their reverse, Birkbeck brings together different scenarios and temporal dimensions. As if holding a spider's web, the artist sustains seemingly impossible links that bring to the surface the constant feedback between different social and temporal spheres - these are links that rationalization and the opticality of physical space normally keep flowing unnoticeably.

Influenced by TV series and science fiction films, by authors such as Langston Hughes and the tradition of Black speculative fiction, for decades Birkbeck has been creating hundreds of timelines that intersect in his drawings. These timelines - he refers to the current one as 3.2 - reinvent historical characters and events: in a single drawing it is possible to recognise Dick Cheney (vice-president under George W. Bush) turned gay sex icon, or a black Ron DeSantis. Behind them, there is a fight in prison, an orgy in which Birkbeck himself participates with people from other dimensions or a scene with dinosaurs in the green lands of the star Pandora. Science fiction in his work has the capacity to convey with intensity the automated patterns of colonialism, environmental overexploitation and contemporary capitalism, but also the intimate relationships that exceed them. In this way, the settings of his drawings pointedly depict the simultaneity of a polyamorous sensual utopia, free of divisions of race, gender and sexual orientation, with scenes of war, apocalypse and toxic pollution. Birkbeck does not shy away from this complexity and introduces himself into these scenarios to take an active attitude based on the collective and affective. The artist includes himself in the drawings as another character who fights against top-down societies, this struggle is also manifested in his idea of God: a playful one, hated by the 1% who accumulate power because he can take the form of any being and be in many places at the same time.

The drawings exhibited in Juf were mostly made during the spring and summer of 2023. Birkbeck's narrative and cumulative practice has generated a symbolism of its own—the pink nipples mark the level of radiation in the body, an atomic navel allows extraterrestrial travel, the domesticated dinosaurs or the fictitious reproductive apparatus— whose coincidences with military, gay and political codes or semiotics insist on the actuality of these fantastic scenes and the need to accept the compatibility of different affective states.

Raynes Birkbeck lives and works in Manhattan, NY. He is a self-taught artist who paints, sculpts, draws, and writes poetry. He chronicles personal and fictitious accounts with subject matter ranging from environmental issues, war, politics, and sex. Individual drawings stand alone, but when seen together, strong narratives appear, woven throughout his body of work and organized by a personalized system consisting of four concurrent dimensions. He has exhibited work at SITUATIONS, the Bureau of General Services—Queer Division, and Safe Gallery.