

Simo Bacar

*The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma*

Kai Althoff

Ryan Huggins

Mia Middleton

Anj Smith

6 October – 4 November 2023

Simo Bacar is delighted to announce the opening of “The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma”, a group exhibition featuring works by Kai Althoff, Ryan Huggins, Mia Middleton and Anj Smith.

“The Oklahoma Theatre will engage members for its company today at Clayton race-course from six o’clock in the morning until midnight. The great Theatre of Oklahoma calls you! Today only and never again! If you miss your chance now you miss it forever! If you think of your future you are one of us! Everyone is welcome! If you want to be an artist, join our company! Our Theatre can find employment for everyone, a place for everyone! If you decide on an engagement we congratulate you here and now! But hurry, so that you get in before midnight! At twelve o’clock the doors will be shut and never opened again. Down with all those who do not believe in us! Up, and to Clayton!”

- Franz Kafka, *Amerika*

Kai Althoff (b. 1966 Cologne) currently lives and works in New York and Cologne. Having turned into a heavily opinionated and high-strung personality, which seems to brood with anger that unloads fast, Kai Althoff wishes to create an antidote to this state of mind, by work that aesthetically calms the soul and seeks to feed a notion of shelter in an elegance reflecting the utilization of art in the homes of people with good taste and intellectual brilliance in times long passed. As soon as this notion seems to be satisfied, he starts to wrangle equally with the content and comfort and ultimate value of such work, which if successful, results in a void that defies words and emotions to be expressed without causing nausea. He seems to wish his art to embody the hefty balance between spirituality and adornment. But spirituality and adornment are no enemies - rather both are to discover their natural unification within the feeble attempt to make life bearable.

His work has been the subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions at institutions including at The Hammer Museum, Whitechapel Gallery, Museum Ludwig, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Tate, Museum of Modern Art, among others. Recent exhibitions include: “HEATWAVE: a screening”, Galerie Neu, Berlin (2023); “Ecstatic: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection”, The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2023); “Room by Room: Concepts, Themes, and Artists in The Rachofsky Collection,” The Warehouse, Dallas, Texas (2023); “Interior”, Michael Werner Gallery, London (2022); “Kai Althoff goes with Bernard Leach,” Whitechapel Gallery, London (2020); “John Dewey, Who? A New Presentation of the Contemporary Collection of Art,” Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2020); “No Dandy, No Fun,” Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (2020); “The Sewers of Mars,” Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York (2020); “Psychic Wounds: On Art & Trauma,” The Warehouse, Rachofsky Collection, Dallas (2020); “Everything is Personal,” TRAMPS, New York (2020); “Just Connect,” Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, Illinois (2020); “Häuptling Klapperndes Geschirr,” TRAMPS, New York (2018); “Kai Althoff: and then leave me to the common swifts,” Museum of Modern Art, New York (2016).

Ryan Huggins (b. 1991 Trinidad) currently lives and works between Trinidad and Düsseldorf, Germany. Huggins’ practice explores ideas surrounding alternative youth subcultures within queer communities. Considering himself a figurative painter, Huggins’ work examines his cultural exchanges and differences migrating from the Caribbean to Europe, as well as its ongoing influence on his artistic output, notions of self, sexuality, identity, and nurture. He examines the vocabulary of historically queer references as a growing language, running parallel to contemporary terminologies of body, social identity, and status.

Ryan Huggins studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Professor Peter Doig and Tomma Abts, where he recently graduated.

Mia Middleton (b. 1988 London) currently lives and works in Lisbon. Middleton’s small-scale paintings explore interiority, memory, and evocation, and capture a tension and threshold between conscious and subconscious, desire and aversion, reality, and fantasy. In these intimate freeze-frames, ephemeral moments are stripped of their context and suspended in time, intimating a narrative without creating one and inviting viewers into a psychological framework of uncertainty and discovery.

The artist studied at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, where she graduated in 2013. Recent exhibitions include: “Love Story”, Roberts Projects, Los Angeles (2023); “Wanderlust”, Roberts Projects, Los Angeles (2023); “Three Secrets”, COMA Gallery, Sydney (2022); “Shelf Life”, Marlborough Gallery, London (2022); “Through the Gate”, PPP, London (2022).

Anj Smith (b. 1978 Kent) lives and works in London. Smith’s work negotiates the space between the genres of portraiture, landscape, and still-life. In her interrogation and celebration of the medium of painting, alluring flora and fauna—from vines, flowers, and ivy to ambiguous creatures and human figures—populate ecologically devastated landscapes. Refusing fast consumption, her work explores issues of gender, ecology, anxiety, and eroticism.

Anj Smith studied at Slade School of Fine Art and at Goldsmiths College in London. Smith has exhibited at institutions around the world, including Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence, Italy; The New Art Gallery Walsall, UK; Mostyn, Llandudno, UK; Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland; Bluecoat, Liverpool, UK; Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville TN, and La Maison Rouge, Paris, France. Smith’s work is also displayed in the collections of many leading international museums including The Victoria and Albert Museum, London; MOCA The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles CA; The Roberts Institute of Art, London, and the Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland. Recent exhibitions include: “Drifting Habitations”, Hauser & Wirth, New York (2023); “Where the Mountain Hare has Lain”, The Perimeter, London (2022); “A Willow Grows Aslant the Brook”, Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence (2022); “Stretching the Body”, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2021); “New Word. The Power of Dreams”, Iwaki City Art Museum, Fukushima (2021); “Sun Rise | Sun Set”, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2021); “World Receivers”, Zabudowicz Collection, London (2019); “The Land We Live In. The Land We Left Behind”, Hauser & Wirth, Bruton (2018).

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