

MORENA DI LUNA



STUDIO K.O.S.

Where we have gone

13 April – 16 June 2024

Studio K.O.S. is a multidisciplinary collective of artists from New York, USA, formed by Angel Abreu and Ricardo Savinon. The collective bases their works on literary texts, recognising the emancipation to be found in the process of reading. They often work directly onto the pages of found books or sheet music that they adhere in a grid to the surface of a canvas or board. Standing for 'Kids of Survival', Studio K.O.S. began as a community initiative for teenagers in the South Bronx led by Tim Rollins (b. 1955, Pittsfield, USA, d. 2017, New York, USA). The current members started with the group between the ages of 12 and 16. Many of the participants in his program were dyslexic, making the collective acutely aware that reading is not a neutral activity but rather a complex process with numerous barriers to access.

An artist, teacher, and activist, Rollins taught at the Intermediate School 52 in the Bronx and sought to use the consumption and discussion of literature as an active part of art production. Initially called Tim Rollins and K.O.S., the collective changed their name following Rollins' death in 2017 and they continue to honour his legacy. The group upholds his work in education, initiating workshops with school and university students as part of their artistic production.

The Scarlet Letter / All About Love (after Nathaniel Hawthorne and bell hooks), 2023

The Scarlet Letter is an 1850 book by American author Nathaniel Hawthorne. Set in the 17th century, the novel follows Hester Prynne, a woman who conceived a daughter out of wedlock and was forced to wear a scarlet letter "A" for adultery. Prynne transforms this symbol meant to be her shame, isolation, and ridicule into power, subversion, and self-acceptance. Abreu observed, "Shame can undermine the ability for embracing self-love. This is at the crux of hooks' *All About Love*. Despite having been published 150 years apart, the intersections in both texts are relevant and powerful. They revolve around self-love, defiance, and transcendence through the sincere practice of loving". This series was made in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts and Upward Bound High School. In this workshop, participants studied hooks' text, writing down words that resonated with them. "We listened to one another read aloud. In essence, we invited the spirits of bell hooks and Nathaniel Hawthorne to join in our collaborative effort. Using the scarlet of Hester Prynne, each participant took the first letter of one of those words and reclaimed their meaning. All to practise self-love" – Angel Abreu, 2024.

A Midsummer Night's Dream (after Shakespeare and Mendelssohn), 2023

These works draw from Shakespeare's fantastical play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, drawing on workshops conducted throughout the last decade. Decorated with colourful "flowers", these forms serve as physical manifestations of Puck's power. In Act II, Oberon declares "Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once: / The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid / Will make or man or woman madly dote / Upon the next live creature that it sees." Oberon instructs Puck to place the

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juice from a flower onto the eyelids of the sleeping Tatiana, a concoction that will cause her to fall in love with the first living thing she perceives once she awakes. "This is the basis of the story... So much in the possibility of joy, laughter in mischief in this power. A great metaphor for life" – Angel Abreu, 2024.

Invisible Man (after Ralph Ellison), 2024

In this series, Studio K.O.S. drew from Ralph Ellison's seminal 1952 text, *Invisible Man*, which explored themes such as the Great Migration, black nationalism, and Marxism. The works also draw from the iconography of the 1960s Civil Rights movement, evoking the aesthetics of the "I Am a Man!" placards carried throughout the 1968 Memphis Sanitation strikes. These collages originate from a series of workshops that took place during the pandemic over Zoom with MoMA New York, The Walker Art Center Minneapolis, Temple University Philadelphia, Windward School Los Angeles and The School of Visual Arts New York, with the pandemic necessitating new spaces for educating creation, interpretation, and collaboration. These pieces form part of a larger work of 1,369 parts that will be presented at The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art upon completion.

The Fire Next Time (after James Baldwin), 2022 & Where Do We Go From Here (after Martin Luther King), 2020

The Fire Next Time (1963) is a collection of two essays by American author and activist James Baldwin which sought to garner publicity for the Civil Rights movement. Published four years later, Martin Luther King's text, *Where Do We Go from Here* (1967), offered a way forward following the 1964 Civil Rights Act, calling for a nonviolent yet extensive social change that bypassed contemporary divides such as separatism and desegregation to call for a cross-party movement in the US. Abreu described, "We conducted a series of seances of sorts in which MLK and Baldwin were conjured to collaborate with us." During workshops, excerpts from both books were read and participants were encouraged to use blades to scalpel the texts and create poetry by subtraction, addition, and omission. Here, cutting, pasting, and obliterating foster novel modes of interpretation.

Studio K.O.S. is Angel Abreu (b. Bronx, NY, USA 1974) and Ricardo Savinon (b. New York, NY, USA 1971). Their selected solo exhibitions include *Invisible Man*, O-Town House, Los Angeles, USA (2022) and *Studio K.O.S: The Continuing Legacy of Tim Rollins and the Kids of Survival*, Wexler Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, USA (2021). Solo exhibitions of Tim Rollins and K.O.S include *Unbound*, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, USA (2016); *Rivers*, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, USA (2014); *On Transfiguration*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Switzerland (2012), *The Black Spot*, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, UK (2012); and Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, UK (1998). Their works are held in museum collections including The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, USA; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, USA; Foundation for Contemporary Art, Mexico City, Mexico; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA; The Museum of Modern Art, Osaka, Japan; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Tate Gallery, London, UK; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA, MoMA, New York USA.