

mo

Museum of
Contemporary
Art Cleve
land



CLEVELAND, Ohio – The Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (moCa) is pleased to present *Skinchangers: Begotten of my Flesh*, the first solo museum exhibition of artist Ruben Ulises Rodriguez Montoya. Featuring a new body of work, this show expands upon the artist's 2022 exhibition at Sargent's Daughters entitled *James Webb and the Thestral Born Without a Vertebrae*, which shares the story of a vampire forced to reconstitute its body from space debris following the destruction of the last spaceship leaving an apocalypse-ravaged Earth.

A work of speculative fiction, *Skinchangers: Begotten of my Flesh* collapses linear time, fueling our anxiety of the unfamiliar while demanding reflection on how histories of abuse allow for a future seepage of toxicity. Using expanded polystyrene as a building block (after all, what material other than plastic can survive the end of the world?), Montoya transforms moCa's Lewis Gallery into the interior of this last spaceship, complete with a celestial soundtrack that draws us into the darkness of the unknown. Mythical, shape-shifting creatures known as *Nahuales* that hatched aboard the vessel during an eon of astral travel hang from the spacecraft's ceiling. Hovering in antigravity yet tethered to the ship's architecture, their eternal home serves as both captor and protector.

a

These *Nahuales* are a part of the artist' cast of characters, cohabitating with their vampiric guardian and the spacecraft's mainframe, which itself is a sentient being, the beating heart that

fuels the vessel throttling through space. Made from detritus of capitalist consumption, vestiges of the sentient, and materials that teeter on the edge of abjection, Montoya's alchemical creatures feed off each other. They are stand-ins for the human body, used to explore how violence erases and eradicates communities of color. In this future apocalypse, processes of decay, regeneration, and shapeshifting for protection and survival graft new meaning upon our understandings of an "ecosystem."

Montoya is the third recipient of Toby's Prize, a biannual award sponsored by philanthropist Toby Devan Lewis (1934-2022) and created to advance the work of emerging artists through exhibitions and publications.

About the Artist



Ruben Ulises Rodriguez Montoya (b.1989 in Parral, Mexico) is based in Mexico City. Montoya received his MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2020. Montoya creates sculptures that are fantastic beings centered around anthologies and social issues concerning border culture, abjection, adaptation, and mestizaje. Montoya's practice is aided by Speculative Fiction, Nahualismo, Sci-Fi, and the labor of his family. His work hybridizes and creates parallels between land, the human, and the animal as a way to investigate the process in which violence eradicates, erases, and erodes communities of color. Upcoming exhibitions include *Flow States – LA TRIENAL 2024* at El Museo de Barrio (New York, NY) and a solo exhibition of new work at ICA San Diego (San Diego, CA). Recent exhibitions include an untitled group exhibition at Artists Space (New York, NY), *Perhaps the Truth* at Ballroom Marfa (Marfa, TX), *La Casa Erosionada* at Anahuacalli Museum (Coyacan, MX), *James Webb and The Thestral Born Without a Vertebrate* at Sargent's Daughters (New York, NY), and *were-:Nenetech Forms* at MOCA Tucson (Tucson, AZ).

About moCa Cleveland

For more than 50 years, the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (moCa) has played a vital role in the city's cultural landscape. moCa is a conduit and catalyst for creativity and inspiration, offering exhibitions and programs that provide public value and make meaning of the art and ideas of our time.

Since its founding in 1968, moCa has presented the works of more than three thousand artists, often through artists' first solo shows. Soon after its founding, moCa was the first in the region to exhibit the works of many vanguard artists such as Laurie Anderson,

Christo, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Adrian Piper, and Andy Warhol. Recent artist commissions and solo exhibitions include work by Tauba Auerbach, Simon Denny, Aleksandra Domanović, Michelle Grabner, Byron Kim, Ragnar Kjartansson, Tony Lewis, Kirk Mangus, Catherine Opie, Adam Pendleton, Sondra Perry, Joyce J. Scott, Do Ho Suh, Liu Wei, Renée Green, and Nina Chanel Abney, among many others.

2024 Institutional Sponsors

All current moCa Cleveland exhibitions are funded by Leadership Circle gifts from Doreen & Dick Cahoon, Joanne Cohen & Morris Wheeler, Margaret Cohen & Kevin Rahilly, Grosvie & Charlie Cooley, Becky Dunn, Harriet Goldberg, Agnes Gund, Jan Lewis, and Toby Devan Lewis.*

moCa Cleveland receives lead institutional support in part by The Cleveland Foundation, the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, the George Gund Foundation, the Nord Family Foundation, the Leonard Krieger Fund of the Cleveland Foundation, the Ohio Arts Council, which receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency, PNC, and the continuing support of the museum's Board of Directors, patrons, and members.

*deceased

###

Cleveland