

THE FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION FOR HAITIAN-AMERICAN ARTIST KATHIA ST. HILAIRE TO OPEN AT THE SPEED IN OCTOBER 2024

The rising artist's first solo museum exhibition in the Midwest will highlight her unique multimedia process and Afro-Caribbean influences

Current Speed: Kathia St. Hilaire
October 25, 2024 – February 9, 2025

Louisville, KY, May 21, 2024 – This October, the **Speed Art Museum** will present ***Current Speed: Kathia St. Hilaire***, the first solo exhibition in the Midwest dedicated to artist Kathia St. Hilaire. St. Hilaire combines printmaking, painting, collage, and weaving to create multifaceted works that illuminate the complex histories of the South Florida Afro-Caribbean communities in which she was raised. This exhibition is the latest installment in the Speed's *Current Speed* series, which is aimed at introducing the Kentuckiana community to new and emerging artists, as well as celebrated mid-career artists previously underrecognized in the region. Previous *Current Speed* exhibitions have explored the works of Sky Hopinka, Leslie Martinez, and Angel Otero. Featuring a new commission alongside other recent works exploring ideas of social mobility, cultural identity, and colonial legacies, *Current Speed: Kathia St. Hilaire* will open October 25, 2024.

Born to Haitian immigrant parents and raised in the Caribbean and African American neighborhoods of South Florida, Kathia St. Hilaire (b. 1995) was trained as a printmaker and utilizes a printing technique where she creates designs on sheets of linoleum, carves and weaves together multiple panels, and then paints surreal scenes that oscillate between fact and fiction. Her works interweave histories of the past with stories of the present, drawing inspiration from Haitian and Latin American mythology, as well as the Haitian Vodun flags from her childhood, which tell the country's history and honor ancestral spirits. Using nontraditional materials like banana leaves, stickers, banknotes, and protest pamphlets in her collage process, many of St. Hilaire's works in this presentation highlight the lingering impacts of the "Banana Wars," a series of conflicts consisting of police actions, American military occupations, and imperial interventions across Latin America from 1898 to 1934.

"The *Current Speed* series aims to bring innovative creative voices and new perspectives to our region, providing a fitting forum for Kathia St. Hilaire's multifaceted artmaking practice," said Speed Art Museum Director **Raphaella Platow**. "Her richly layered ideas and materials encourage us to dig deeper and consider the tapestry of our interlinked histories and cultures—highlighting not only a personal past, but the shared, lived experiences of the communities that have shaped her, and inviting viewers to imagine new possibilities for the future."

St. Hilaire was introduced to the region in 2023 when one of her works was featured in the Speed's exhibition *The Bitter and the Sweet: Kentucky Sugar Chests, Enslavement, and the Transatlantic World 1790-1865*. Now returning for her first solo exhibition at the Museum, St. Hilaire will create a new work in collaboration with curator Tyler Blackwell specifically for the Speed, inspired by her visits to Louisville as well as research conducted on the Museum's collections. Following the exhibition, the commissioned work will enter the Museum's permanent collection.

“When I first encountered Kathia St. Hilaire’s powerful and enthralling work five or six years ago, I knew I wanted to collaborate with her at some point. When I arrived at the Speed, it immediately became clear that there might be an opportunity to share her practice with the Louisville community more broadly through *Current Speed*, marking her first solo exhibition in the Midwest,” said Speed Curator of Contemporary Art **Tyler Blackwell**. “We are honored that Kathia is drawing on her experiences in Louisville and the Speed’s own collections to inspire a new work that will be showcased in this exhibition and serve as an enduring contribution to the Museum as we continue to grow our contemporary collection.”

Organized as a collaboration between the Speed Art Museum and the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, *Current Speed: Kathia St. Hilaire* is co-curated by Tyler Blackwell, curator of contemporary art at the Speed, with Robert Wiesenberger, curator of contemporary projects at the Clark. A version of the exhibition is on view as *Kathia St. Hilaire: Invisible Empires* at the Clark Art Institute from May 11 to September 22, 2024 before it travels to the Speed.

About the Artist

Kathia St. Hilaire received her MFA in Painting and Printmaking at the Yale School of Art and her BFA in Printmaking at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her work has recently been featured in exhibitions at the NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale; Perrotin, New York; the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs; Half Gallery, New York; Blum & Poe, New York; and James Fuentes, New York.

About the Speed Art Museum

The Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky is the state’s oldest and largest art museum, and has served as a vital cultural resource for the Louisville community and the wider region for nearly 100 years. The Speed’s ever-growing encyclopedic collection, timely exhibitions, and community-driven programming explore contemporary issues and inspire meaningful personal experiences through the transformative power of art, sparking new conversations and creating opportunities for dialogue. Located on the campus of the University of Louisville but operating as an independent nonprofit institution, the Speed provides visitors from around the world with opportunities to engage with art through public and academic programs, screenings at the Speed Cinema, family offerings in the Art Sparks interactive learning gallery, and more. Fulfilling its mission of inviting everyone to celebrate art forever, the Speed is committed to creating a welcoming and accessible space for the community, including free admission on Sundays, Community Connections artmaking programs, and the Speed For All free membership. For more information, visit speedmuseum.org.

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