

ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / fax: 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com



Didier William
Beyond the Bodies' Edge
January 9 – February 22, 2025

Altman Siegel is thrilled to present an exhibition of new work by Didier William. This suite of paintings on panel builds upon the artist's recent large-scale installation at Prospect New Orleans. Here, William explores the precarity of belonging, considering the groundlessness that sometimes marks the cultural identity of immigrant populations. What systems, codes, or traditions define cultural identity on foreign land? Fusing vibrant color with exuberant figuration, these tactile works merge ancestral narratives with autobiographical lore set against an impending climate catastrophe. Fiery horizons and bursts of energetic bolts bifurcate the stasis of the picture plane. The churn represented in this imagery not only speaks to the ever-changing social, economic, and political landscape but also to the durational aspect of painting itself. For William, painting is a time-based medium. It's not a static constant but rather something that unfurls itself to the viewer over multiple exchanges of looking. The ambiguous, supernatural, muscular forms that occupy this primordial yet verdant terrain have been described as titans. But the strength of these luminous figures also lies in their vulnerability. The characters in these paintings are clad in chainmail-like armor, which reveals itself to be composed of hundreds if not thousands of eyes upon closer inspection. The entire world, all its pain and beauty, penetrates the mind through this relatively small and fragile ocular device – but vision is also arguably our most reliable defense. The acute tension between our permeability and our unyielding drive toward endurance is elucidated in these objects.

In an entirely text-based work, the words “steel yourself?” are inscribed into a wooden substrate. Produced shortly after the 2024 presidential election, these words both warn the viewer to brace themselves for what's to come and describe the protective layer that encompasses William's signature humanoid forms. Will the future be destructive? Cleansing? Survivable?

Opaque scenes unfold with emotive intensity and great restraint throughout the artist's practice. Deploying a wide range of techniques, including printmaking, wood carving, monumental sculpture, and painting, William masterfully interconnects narratives around colonialism, ecological degradation, deeply personal references, and the subject of painting itself to arrive at powerfully idiosyncratic works.

Didier William (b. 1983) lives and works in Philadelphia and is originally from Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He earned a BFA in painting from The Maryland Institute College of Art and an MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale University School of Art. His work has been exhibited in the Bronx Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Museum of Latin American Art, Frist Art Museum, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Carnegie Museum of Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Rudolph Tegnors Museum and Statue Park, Figge Art Museum, and in the Prospect.6 Biennial. William was an artist-in-residence at the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation in Brooklyn, NY, a 2018 recipient of the Rosenthal Family Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a 2020 recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant, a 2021 recipient of Pew Fellowship from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, and a 2023 recipient of a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Grant. He has taught at several institutions, including Yale School of Art, Vassar College, Columbia University, UPenn, and SUNY Purchase. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Expanded Print at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University.

ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / *fax:* 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com

For more information, please contact Altman Siegel at info@altmansiegel.com or 415-576-9300.