

Monsieur Zohore
Get Well Soon
May 16–July 19, 2024
Lower Level

Magenta Plains is pleased to present *Monsieur Zohore: Get Well Soon*, the artist's third project and first solo exhibition with the gallery. A series of sculptures and paintings make up the central installation and on the opening night a multifaceted performance *MZ.29 (Visitations)* (2023-2024) will unfold, beginning with spontaneous singing telegrams offering melodic well wishes to an unsuspecting audience.

In his previous work, the artist addressed the fraught conditions that representations of Blackness must navigate, including tensions between the agency embedded in Black visibility and the tendency to commodify these representations into objects of consumption and surveillance. The contemporary art world often purports to celebrate representations of marginalized identities like the queer POC, but at the same time, it's connected to systems designed to negate those very positions. Zohore thinks of this condition as a malady, treated by nothing less than a full body cast.

In a turn from his previous work, this show opens the door to peer into histories of Black representation such as Jackie Robinson sliding into home base or Pope L crawling in a Superman costume. With sly subversiveness, Zohore also includes George Washington's dentures made from teeth robbed from the mouths of enslaved people, fastened with gold screws into a base of hippopotamus ivory. This image is centered in a composition including Daffy Duck and Sylvester the Cat who register the horrific absurdity of a story about the rotten foundation of the mouth that declared a nation's independence. Both characters seem to be wearing piano keys as teeth, and these ivories have been tickled to create a stunned daze, represented by stars that circle above their heads. These shining points of light double as the sparkles from curls of oozing toothpaste – striped in red, white, and blue – that slither across the painting's surface.

Monsieur Zohore has long used Bounty™ - "the quicker picker upper" - as the main substrate for his work. Like toothpaste, this signals the promise of an easy clean up, of not only literal spills, but also the false promise of metaphorically sanitizing abject violence. The most we can do is offer clowns and balloons and band-aids and rainbows and cartoon promises like "Don't worry, everything will be great in the warm glow of morning!"

The sculptural works include *Beloved/Baby/Maker* (1962-2024) a child kneeling on a bed of rice, masked with a reproduction of an early self portrait by Kerry James Marshall, who stares up towards a crucifix with the word "beloved" tattooed on its head; *Ain't No Mountain / Keep Me From You* (1635-2024) a flying nun that moves in perpetual motion up and down a chair lift; and *Tableau/Vivant* (2024), a skeleton, with a bedpan full of urine resting on its sacrum, its arms raised in surrender, covered in cash and a chickenpox smattering of red "sold" gallery stickers. There is also *Invasive/Procedures* (2005-2024) a torso with truncated legs and a sash made of braided paper towel that sits just below Rashid Johnson's 2005 full frontal nude self portrait in homage to Barkley Hendrick

The images conjured up in this exhibition are too many to name and hold too many rabbit holes of meaning to list here but many could best be summed up as Frankenstein playing the game Operation on himself, an image as absurd as a sad clown's pratfalls or the zombies from Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse*, sunbathing on the beaches of Haiti with a Mai Tai. Monsieur Zohore zips back and forth between showing us ridiculous hilarity, profound sadness, and back again to a cheery optimism, all the while grinning with knowing alacrity, eager for the next healing gesture in a world that will never stop needing care.

—Noah Simblist

Monsieur Zohore (b.1993 Potomac, MD) is an Ivorian-American artist whose practice investigates the nature of consumption and digestion by conflating domestic quotidian life and labor practices with artistic production. Through performance, painting, video, installation, and sculpture, Monsieur Zohore draws from art historical and queer histories as well as popular culture and his Ivorian-American heritage, deploying systems of humor, economics, religion, and mourning.

He received an MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2020 and a BFA from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York in 2015. He is currently Assistant Professor of Painting and Printmaking at Virginia Commonwealth University, and lives and works between Richmond, VA, New York, NY, and Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Previous solo exhibitions include *That's Amore*, KDR305, Miami, FL (2022-23); *MZ.25 (My Condolences)*, M+B, Los Angeles, CA (2023); *Les Eternels*, von ammon co., Washington D.C. (2022); *Le Revenant*, De Boer, Los Angeles, CA (2021) and *Tu Rêves*, Jack Barrett Gallery, New York, NY (2021).

His work has been included in group exhibitions at Sperling, Munich, DE (2024); KOW, Berlin, DE (2024); The Baltimore Museum of Art, MD (2023, 2020); Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University, AL (2023); Galerie Mitterand, Paris, FR (2023); Sculpture Center, New York, NY (2022); The Baker Museum, Naples, FL (2022); Pace Gallery, New York, NY (2022); Von Ammon Co., Washington, D.C. (2022); The Visual Arts Centre of Clarington, Bowmanville, ON (2022); Yeh Art Gallery, St. John's University, New York, NY (2022); Tick Tack, Antwerp, BE (2022); Institute for Contemporary Art, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (2021); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York, NY (2021); Terrault Gallery, Baltimore, MD (2020); and The Columbus Museum of Art, OH (2013). His work will be included in upcoming exhibitions at the Kreeger Museum and the Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.

His work is in the public collections of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., the Baltimore Museum of Art, MD, the Rubell Museum, Miami, FL, The Zuzeum, Riga, LV, The Bunker Artspace, West Palm Beach, FL, Dangxia Art Space, Beijing, CN, Brookfield Collection, New York, NY, The Roux Collection, Panama City, PN, and Marquez Art Projects, Miami, FL.

As a curator, writer and educator, Noah Simblist works on the ways in which contemporary artists address history, sovereignty, and the tensions between political forces and self determination. He edited the book *Tania Bruguera: The Francis Effect* (Deep Vellum, 2022) as well as *Commonwealth* (Publication Studio, 2022) and *Artist in Residence* (Publication Studio, 2021). Simblist has contributed to Art in America, E-flux, Art Journal, Terremoto and other publications. His curatorial projects include *Commonwealth* at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University (2020), *Conjunctions and Disjunctions* at Black Ground in Cali, Colombia (2022). *Summer Sessions: Commonwealth* at the ICA at VCU (2019), *Aissa Deebe: Exile is Hard Work* at Birzeit University Museum in Palestine (2017), *False Flags* at Pelican Bomb in New Orleans (2016), and *Emergency Measures* at the Power Station, Dallas (2015). He is associate professor of art at Virginia Commonwealth University. Upcoming projects include *Cracks in the Edifice: Niemeyer's Futuristic* by the Graham Foundation.