
MARLON FORRESTER: BLACKMOON RISING

September 1 - October 17, 2021

Abigail Ogilvy Gallery is proud to present our inaugural solo exhibition of artwork by Marlon Forrester. *Blackmoon Rising* is a retrospective of his body of work created over the past five years. Forrester is an artist, educator, and athlete working in Boston, MA. Primary to his practice is an exploration of concepts related to the black male body and basketball through performance, painting, drawing, sculpture, large scale installations, and video. Transformation and ritual are the foundational elements.

Marlon Forrester's concepts originate from his experiences growing up in Boston, all while reflecting on his homeland, the South American coastal country Guyana. It was there that Forrester was inspired by family members taking part in the construction of sculptures and floats, performing in costumes for Carnival. Art wove itself seamlessly into the rich cultural background of Guyana, a melting pot of ethnic groups including people of African, Indian, Amerindian, European and Chinese descent.

The works on view are a direct reflection of Forrester's vibrant upbringing and the Guyanese diaspora. His body of work is a response to the challenge, "how does one create artwork for people that will use it beyond the context of today?"

Forrester's artwork contains an intentional repetition of symbols, colors, patterns, and compositional elements that are his unique personal language with the paintings. The number 23 shows up frequently and is related not just to the sport of basketball, but also to the '23 enigma' - this number is considered both a symbol of luck and transformation. The abstract geometric shapes patterning the backgrounds of his work derive from a basketball court - the checkered optical color fields are constant throughout the works. The majority of his paintings are void of color, often grayscale with the occasional accent of bright cerulean or a deep red, reminiscent of a worn

basketball. Forrester uses color to reiterate the cultural significance of his subjects: the white color contrasting with the black backgrounds signifies initiation ceremonies in which white ashes formed by burning a specific herb are used for both a sacred and practical use. In many African tribes the white color signifies the fulfillment of an exploit, dispenses strength and health, cleanses and embellishes the skin, and protects the wearer from insects and parasites.

When considering the body as protest, Forrester acknowledges the difference between motion and action. He pushes the boundaries of his work to become the motion that creates change. Rooted in ritual and the repetition of motifs, Forrester's finished work conveys the physical process of its creation, illustrating motions that result in these patterns throughout the work, muscle memory that is not at all different from that of an athlete.

Marlon Forrester, born in Guyana, South America, is an artist and educator raised in Boston, MA. Forrester is a graduate of School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, B.A. 2008 and Yale School of Art, M.F.A. 2010. He is currently a painting faculty member at School of The Museum of Fine Arts Boston. He is a resident artist at African-American Masters Artist Residency Program (AAMARP) adjunct to the Department of African-American Studies in association with Northeastern University. He has shown both internationally and nationally, concerned with the corporate use of the black body, or the body as logo, Forrester's paintings, drawings, sculptures, and multimedia works reflect meditations on the exploitation implicit in the simultaneous apotheosis and fear of the muscular black figure in America.