
Big Time Sensuality

Curated by Alexandra Terry

September 16 – October 28, 2023

Maria Arroyo | Yasmine Esfandiary | Jade Gordon & Megan Whitmarsh | Abel Guzman |
Chad Hagerman | Jane Hollick | Cassandra C. Jones | Sherise Lee | Elena Stonaker |
Leonard Wilson

Abigail Ogilvy Gallery is pleased to present *Big Time Sensuality*, a group exhibition curated by Alexandra Terry, opening on September 16th, 2023. This exhibition marks the official launch of the gallery's new Los Angeles space, an exciting bi-coastal expansion from their original location in Boston, which owner Abigail Ogilvy Ryan founded in 2015.

Big Time Sensuality features a selection of paintings, ceramics, fiber works, and photography from artists across the Central Coast and Southern California. It is a jubilant celebration of the vibrant, the bold, and the playful. The exhibition's title was inspired by Björk's 1993 eponymous song (from her debut album, *Debut*), which celebrates the upbeat energy and passion of being on the precipice of something exciting and having the courage to take the leap (an apt description of opening a gallery!). "Sensuality" also speaks to the vibrant, luscious nature of the artworks that light up our senses. Curator Alexandra Terry says that the exhibition "embarks on an exploration of the transformative power of potentiality, harnessing the unparalleled musician's call for vulnerability and courage as necessary tools for creativity."

Maria Arroyo's practice ranges seamlessly across media. Her skill lies in her ability to create narratives that pull and encompass the viewer into the reality she has created. Stemming from familiar references – popular or personal – she generates fantastical worlds gilded in pattern, color, objects and creatures of all kinds. Her alternate universes are suspended from the everyday but not entirely apart from it either. The influence of Maria's heritage and extended visits with her family in Mexico filter into her work as penchants for ornamentation, myth and folklore. Arroyo's ceramics are typically small, detailed figurines or tableaus of the characters or scenes that make up these fantastical worlds. Benevolent, or enemies made harmless, her characters feel to be on the verge of speaking or breaking into song; belonging to worlds that endlessly reproduce new oddities and joys. Maria began drawing and painting in the 1980s as a participant in the Alpha Art Studio program at the Alpha Resource Center of Santa Barbara. Since 2013, she has expanded her practice to a range of other media as an artist at Slingshot / Alpha Art Studio.

Yasmine Esfandiary is an Iranian artist living and working between Santa Barbara, CA and the South of France. As the daughter of an ambassador, she spent her childhood living throughout the Middle East and Europe. After studying at the American School in Milan and L'Ecole Superieure D'Art Graphique et Photographie in Paris, Esfandiary moved to the U.S. to attend Rhode Island School of Design. She remained in the States for over twenty years, where she developed her creative practice and exhibited extensively. Esfandiary decided to split her time between Europe and the U.S. and has spent the last fifteen years exhibiting in Italy, France, the UK, the UAE, and North America.

In their collaborative practice, **Jade Gordon and Megan Whitmarsh** enact subjects such as New Age alternative therapies, 1970s feminist speculative science fiction, and experimental theater and movement practices, often using humor to address themes pertaining to aging, consumerism, and time travel. Their work fosters engagement with the group, rather than focusing on the individual, in an effort to flatten hierarchies and question singular authorship while transforming the gallery into a space for dialogue and thoughtful participation. On the nature of their practice, Gordon and Whitmarsh state: "Collaborating is like a river with its own current and we jump in the flow. We activate things together that we cannot activate on our own. Because we have different skill sets, we learn from each other. We edit each other, resulting in distillation. We allow each other to take charge, we trust and give up control."

Abel Guzman's studio is "a mystic laboratory where I assume my role as Bruja-Scientist. Guided by personal narrative and the influence of my great-grandma's Mexican bruja, I employ a scientific process to conjure and access spiritual realms. My iterative series of portal drawings and handicraft sculptures depict vibrational energies and spirit bodies. When I draw, I use my body as a vessel through which spiritual vibrations and my own anxieties can be channeled into repetitive pin striping or scrawled designs. The act of painting and drawing releases these energies, and the resulting layers of densely clustered marks form colorful portals into other dimensions and psychological spaces. Recognizing how my own body might momentarily contain or channel these forces, I began creating woven vessels using wire and pipe cleaners. The objects then undergo a unique crystallization process I've developed incorporating sugar and latex. After an incubation period the vessels emerge as transformed artifacts, appearing simultaneously as germinating and decaying forms. I fashion plugs and caps for the containers so that the objects fully encapsulate the distinct vibrational energies or spirit bodies reflected in their designs. Through my meditative weaving and drawing practice, I intend to rejoin the spiritual realm with the material world, and the traditions of bruja with new age mysticism and queer realities."

Chad Hagerman is a contemporary furniture designer. His spirit can best be described as “the power of manifestation.” A straight-up, self-taught doer, his will to acquire knowledge and skill was the driving force that made him into the exceptional maker he is today.

As a result of Hagerman’s artistic gaze and sensibility when approaching projects, managing to capture and portray the essence of the space and those who inhabit it, he has worked with some of LA’s most influential personalities. With an intoxicating know-how, he was capable of creating new paths for beautifully executed handcraft designs, turning every piece into an emotional and meaningful experience. Born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, by the age of four his grandfather, a wood-shop teacher and car collector, passed on to him his love for the handcrafted and introduced him to the medium he would later use as his main art form. Working as an apprentice to a furniture maker in Sweden who spoke little English, he learned new ways of engaging in profound communication without the use of verbal language; enhancing an energetic connection. He emerged from this experience with what would become the foundation to his design standpoints and a deeper comprehension of human nature through the power of intention, and then incorporated all of these impressions into his work. It was in northern Europe that traditional Scandinavian aesthetic resonated immediately with him –he saw great beauty in the clean, simple and practical, while his return to the US, settling in California in his early 20s, brought together a combination of attributes that would remain constants in his endeavors: With newfound skills in architectural development, he discovered sound value and admiration for elements found in the early stages of building –exposed wood and hardware, raw concrete, bare steel and other natural edge materials– that would define his contemporary style. Today, his work reflects his belief in the social significance of the objects that we choose to surround ourselves with and the dynamic relationship we share with our day-to-day environment.

Jane Hollick was born in New Jersey but moved and traveled frequently as a child due to her father being in the military. Her work continues to reference the places she has lived, visited, and continues to admire. As a painter, her use of paint defines her landscapes as much as her subject matter. Her distinct linear marks and striated use of color give her work an oscillating vibrancy and character. This use of color is carried over into her ceramics where her figures, often animals, and other forms receive a similar application of color or construction of form. Hollick has maintained a successful painting and drawing practice for several decades. Her work was a significant motivation for the development of Slingshot out of its antecedent, Alpha Art Studio. She has since continued her practice at Slingshot since 2013. Slingshot, a progressive arts studio in downtown Santa Barbara, supports the independent practice and professional visibility of artists with developmental disabilities in Santa Barbara County.

Cassandra C. Jones was born in Alpine, TX (USA) in 1975 and lives and works in Ojai, CA. They are a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University with an MFA in Interdisciplinary Fine Arts and

received their BFA from California College of Arts with a concentration in Photography/Glass. Jones has been awarded artist residencies in Germany, the Czech Republic, Canada, and across the United States, and their work has been exhibited both throughout the United States and in Europe. Select recent exhibitions include: Digital Worlds: New Media from the Museum's Collection, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, TX (2018), The Awakening, Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Boston MA (2017), Ritual and Desire, Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS (2017). Jones has received several awards and residencies, including the Egon Schiele Art Centrum, Drake Hotel Artist Residency, Invitational, Toronto, Canada (2006), and the Vira I. Heinz Endowment awarded by the Virginia Center of Creative Arts (2004).

Sherise Lee is a Chinese American, interdisciplinary artist living in Los Angeles, California. Her experiential works have been included at These Days Gallery, Los Angeles and the Palm Springs Art Museum. In addition, Lee has a holistic hypnosis wellness practice.

Elena Stonaker is a multi-media artist working in interactive textile installation, painting, sculpture, design, video, and participatory audience experiences. With a deep interest in exploring a crossover between art and a wide spectrum of healing modalities and creation mythologies, Stonaker creates hyper-feminine surreal worlds based on archetypal visual language, using softness, beauty and comfort to create a safe space to explore shadow and discomfort. A major part of her practice is creating works that evolve over time... evocative of the process of spiritual growth. Pieces are cut apart, reworked, sewn back together in different configurations, with different uses... sculptures transform to wearable garments and then back again. Her work aims at subtly molding balance while acknowledging that imbalance opens the doorway to growth.

Leonard Wilson is fascinated by the figure and ordinary, sometimes banal, aspects of daily life. His figures are sensual but drawn with simple, direct lines; often flooded with washes of color. The artist, who is Deaf, communicates only through ASL. A gestural dominance that is carried over into the confident hand and immediacy of his imagery. His ceramic vessels are highly tactile, formed from hand-rolled coils that undulate with curves that fold over themselves, suggesting the body without being explicitly sensual. Often on the brink of collapsing during construction, Wilson, finishes off these vessels with a capricious sense of color to retain something of the mood, or confidence of his figurative work.

Leonard Wilson has been an artist at Slingshot / Alpha Art Studio since 2013. He comes from a rich background in the arts, stemming from his mother who has long been involved in arts and education.

About Alexandra Terry

Alexandra Terry is a curator based on the Central Coast of California. Most recently she was Chief Curator at Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara (MCASB) where she organized solo exhibitions by artists including Shana Moulton, Genevieve Gaignard, Barry McGee, and Rosha Yaghmai, as well as group exhibitions featuring Simone Forti, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, and Gabriela Ruiz among others. Previously Terry was Curator & Artistic Director at MOP Foundation, a London-based organization dedicated to supporting and exhibiting contemporary Iranian artists. She has curated exhibitions in the US, UK, and UAE, and has contributed to art publications internationally. Upcoming exhibitions include *Big Time Sensuality* (September 15 - October 25, 2023) at Abigail Ogilvy Gallery, Los Angeles, and *Labor of Love* (January 16 - April 27, 2024) at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Portland State University.

About Abigail Ogilvy Gallery

Abigail Ogilvy Gallery provides a platform for new perspectives and education through independent curation and artist partnerships. Their collaborative approach upends the traditional gallery model and aims to enhance the careers of artists, curators, collectors, and other art world professionals, both emerging and established. With spaces in Boston and LA, AOG provides a link between creative communities on the coasts and expands the reach of artists who have not yet been recognized or shown in these areas. The gallery program primarily features guest curators in order to share diverse perspectives and voices within the Los Angeles area and the greater art market. Owner Abigail Ogilvy Ryan founded the Boston gallery in 2015 and opened the LA location in 2023. AOG is committed to showing a wide range of artistic ideas and media.

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