ART

Paul Anthony Smith's Photographs Surprise at 300 City Bus Stops

08.20.25 | By David Behringer



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #6, 2025. Photo: Nicholas Knight, Courtesy of Public Art Fund, NY

This summer, one of the most intriguing and surprising exhibitions might find *you*. Paul Anthony Smith's "Melodies from a running spring", presented by Public Art Fund, is currently appearing on 300 JCDecaux bus shelters across New York, Boston, and Chicago through September 7, 2025. Once you know they exist, these black-and-white modified photographs pull you closer through their magnetic detail and unexpected placements.



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #7, 2025. Photo: Nicholas Knight, Courtesy of Public Art Fund, NY



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #3, 2025. Photo: Nicholas Knight, Courtesy of Public Art Fund, NY



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #5, 2025. Photo: Nicholas Knight, Courtesy of Public Art Fund, NY

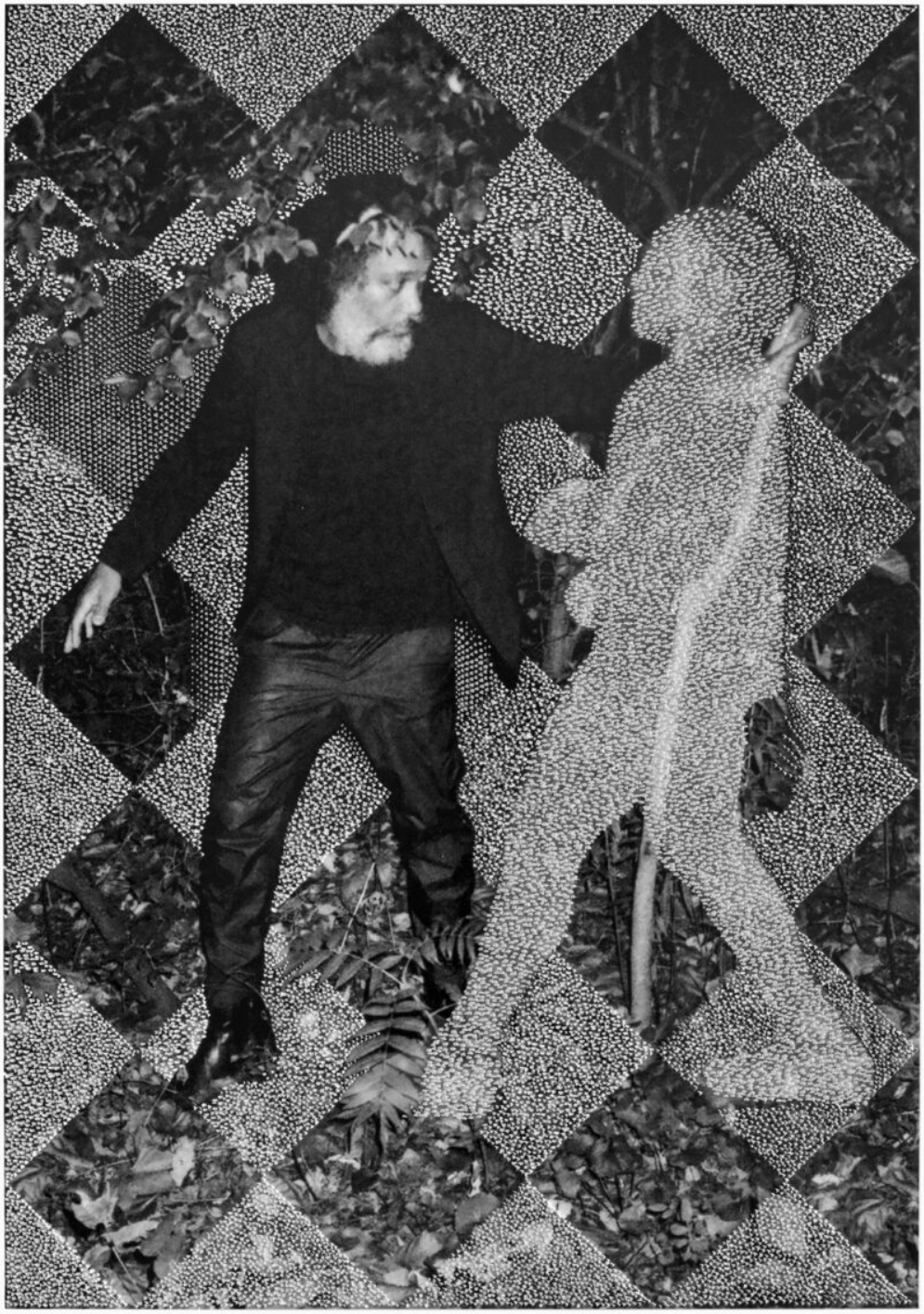
Paul Anthony Smith, a Jamaican-born, New York City-based artist is known for his signature "picotage" technique – a process of gouging the surface of his photographs hundreds of times with a handmade tool (see it on his Instagram). The effect resembles glitter or LED lights from a distance and can obscure or highlight areas of the image – pulling details out of the darkness, adding a geometric background pattern, or camouflaging sections.



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #7, 2025, Courtesy of the artist
Presented by Public Art Fund

In this new series of work, Smith photographed St. Thomian Olympic fencer Daryl Homer and Jamaican interdisciplinary artist Zachary Fabri in natural landscapes. Within the photographs, their movements are often in conversation with each other, but also,

because of the artworks' near-life-size scale, can draw surprising comparisons to silhouettes of unknowing pedestrians nearby.



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #3, 2025, Courtesy of the artist
Presented by Public Art Fund



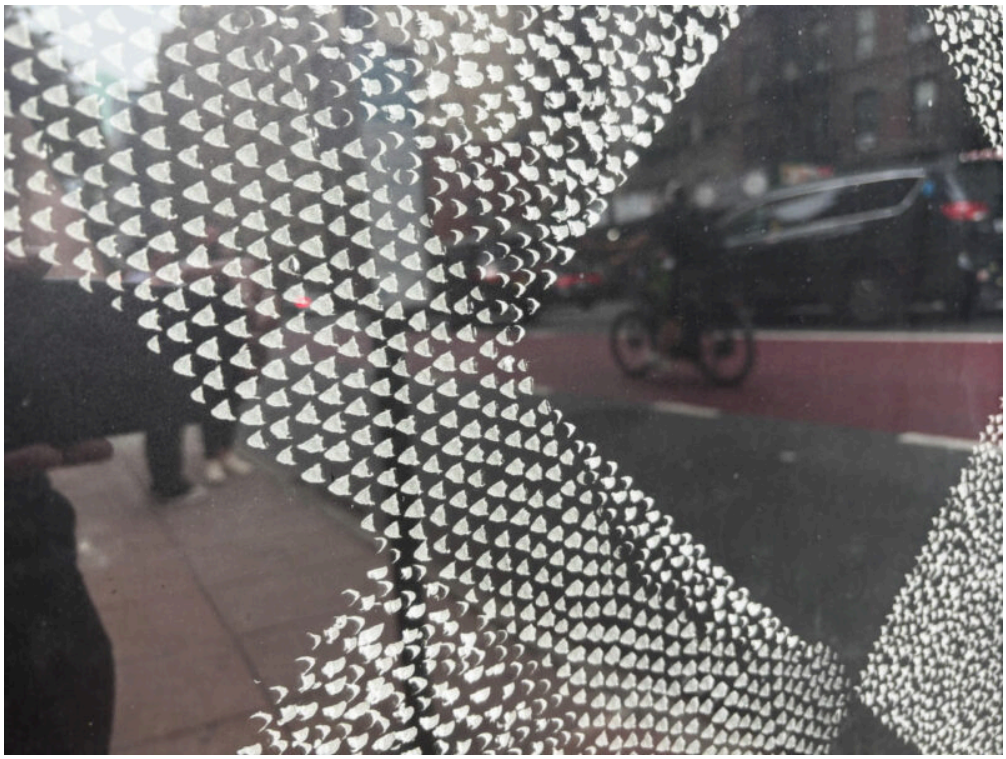
Paul Anthony Smith Melody #9, 2025, Courtesy of the artist
Presented by Public Art Fund



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #6, 2025, Courtesy of the artist
Presented by Public Art Fund

Known for his works that explores the Caribbean diaspora, Smith offers a contrasting view than the color-saturated tourist marketing campaigns that can sensationalize Jamaica and the Caribbean and often erase the native communities. This advertising

counterpoint also relates to their specific placement, occupying areas that normally hold ads for movies, products, and more.



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #3, 2025 (detail)



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #8, 2025 (detail, with reflection of author)

It's worth noting that these are 300 *prints* of nine original "picotage" works. Though not textured themselves, they are produced at such high resolution that it is nearly impossible to discern whether you're looking at actual paper punctures or photographs *of* punctures. In fact as I was photographing the two detail shots for this article (above), I had a friendly debate with a stranger about whether these were 2D or 3D. I don't think they believed me. Everything about these – from the content, color, material, location, and detail – results in great moments of unexpected pause in a city that is constantly competing for your time and visual attention.



Paul Anthony Smith Melody #2, 2025. Photo: Nicholas Knight, Courtesy of Public Art Fund, NY

Visit Public Art Fund's website to find interactive maps of the artwork in New York, Boston, and Chicago, but the best experience is simply to keep your attention open. I also recommend following his two galleries for future exhibitions of his work: Jack Shainman Gallery in New York, and Timothy Taylor in London.



Portrait of artist Paul Anthony Smith \\\ Photo: Courtesy of Andre D. Wagner

What: Paul Anthony Smith: Melodies from a running spring
Where: Presented by Public Art Fund on 300 JCDecaux bus shelters in New York City, Boston, and Chicago (map link)
When: July 9 -September 7, 2025

All images Courtesy of Paul Anthony Smith and Public Art Fund, New York.

The Phillips Collection shines a light on Black American collage art

In an interview with STIR, Co-Curators Katie Delmez and Adrienne L Childs discuss the multifarious approaches to collage making on display in *Multiplicity*.

by Manu SharmaPublished on : Jul 30, 2024

The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, the United States, is currently presenting *Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage*, heralded as the first major museum exhibition that examines collage art in relation to Black identity in the United States. *Multiplicity* is a travelling exhibition organised by the Frist Art Museum in Nashville. It was first shown at Frist from September 15 - December 31, 2023 and runs in Washington from July 6 - September 22, 2024, for the final leg of its journey. The show is curated by Katie Delmez, Senior Curator, Frist Art Museum and the organising curator for its Washington presentation is Adrienne L. Childs, Senior Consulting Curator, The Phillips Collection. The two join STIR in an interview that explores how the exhibiting artists have innovated through collage.



Hyperinvisibility, photomontage on cotton paper, 2022, Tay Butler Image: © Tay Butler

The Phillips Collection's presentation is intergenerational, including artists such as Lauren Halsey and Tay Butler who use cutouts from sources such as magazines, Rashid Johnson – whose work is reminiscent of mosaic art, Tschabalala Self who is famed for her depictions of Black women and multimedia artist Sanford Biggers.

> Identity is never one thing. It's never easy to read on the surface. – Adrienne L. Childs, Senior Consulting Curator, The Phillips Collection



Sprewell, fabric, painted canvas, silk, jeans, painted newsprint, stamp, thread, photographic, transfer on paper, and acrylic on canvas, 2020, Tschabalala Self
Image: © Tschabalala Self; Courtesy of Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift; Pilar Corrias, London and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

As the show's curators explain, the artists exhibited in *Multiplicity* tend to use collage materials they have a personal connection to. In Delmez's words, "Artists like Tay Butler and others in the exhibition use specific materials that speak to their own identity and lived experience. An avid amateur basketball player and lifelong fan, Butler cuts out figures from his collection of trade magazines like *SLAM* (an American basketball magazine that has run since 1994) to explore the complex role that professional sports often play in the lives of Black men." The curator also references Tschabalala Self, who incorporates materials such as pieces of her blue jeans and her mother's tablecloth into her multimedia art compositions to connect her artistic expression to her identity.



Archetype of a 5 Star, acrylic, spray paint, glitter, ink, and cut-paper on canvas, 2018, Jamea Richmond-Edwards Image: © Jamea Richmond-Edwards; Courtesy of Rubell Museum, Miami

Childs adds to this, explaining that the patchwork nature of collage art reflects the fragmented nature of human identity. As she tells STIR, "Identity is never one thing. It's never easy to read on the surface. The artists uncover the fragments that often make up identity and reassemble them in compelling ways."



CARICOM, found flags, unique picotage and acrylic on inkjet print mounted on museum board and aluminium composite panel, 2022, Paul Anthony Smith Image: © Paul Anthony Smith; Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery

Collage making can also provide artists with an escape from flatness, as with Tschabalala Self, Derek Fordjour and Sanford Biggers, the latter among whom has presented work in atypical, polygonal framings reminiscent of American artist Mike Cloud. STIR interviewed Cloud previously, in an enlightening conversation that focuses on his collage making practice and his preference for nontraditional framing formats.



Moment (from #BetterGardensAndJungles), cut-paper collage on canvas, plastic Ziploc bag, 2017, Lester Julian Merriweather Image: © Lester Julian Merriweather

Delmez discusses the show's interplay of flatness and texture, telling STIR, "A range of surfaces can be seen in the exhibition, from the relatively flat collages of Deborah Roberts, Derrick Adams and Nina Chanel Abney, who seem to go to great lengths to form a tight fusion between substrate and added paper or fabric, to more textured work by Derek Fordjour, who carves into his layered compilations as the last step of his labour intensive process, to create an undulating topography…"



Untitled (Turn that Ship Away) (from #BetterGardensAndJungles), cut-paper collage on canvas, 2022, Lester Julian Merriweather Image: © Lester Julian Merriweather

The Phillips Collection's show highlights the abundance of collage making in contemporary American art by Black artists and certainly does its titling justice through the diversity of approaches to collaging that are on display. Hopefully, *Multiplicity* will spark other contemporary art presentations of its kind and shall inspire other young artists to consider deeply the relationship between the materials they work with and their personal histories.

The artists being shown in *Multiplicity* also include Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Radcliffe Bailey, McArthur Binion, Brittney Boyd Bullock, Mark Bradford, Zoë Charlton, Andrea Chung, Jamal Cyrus, M. Florine Démosthène, Genevieve Gaignard, Lauren Halsey, Kahlil Robert Irving, Tomashi Jackson, Yashua Klos, YoYo Lander, Kerry James Marshall, Rod McGaha, Helina Metaferia, Wardell Milan, Joiri Minaya, Troy Montes-Michie, Devin N. Morris, Wangechi Mutu, Narcissister, Rashaad Newsome, Lovie Olivia, Ebony G. Patterson, Howardena Pindell, Jamea Richmond-Edwards, Lanecia A. Rouse, Devan Shimoyama, David Shrobe, Lorna Simpson, Nyugen E. Smith, Paul Anthony Smith, Shinique Smith, Mickalene Thomas, Kara Walker, Didier William and Kandis Williams.

'Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage' runs at The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC from July 6 - September 22, 2024.
Read on:

FINANCIAL TIMES

Paul Anthony Smith on finding photos and piercing paintings

The Jamaican-born artist uses a technique called picotage to makes his work shimmer

Julia Halperin OCTOBER 7 2024



When the artist Paul Anthony Smith sees an abandoned photo album on the street, he snaps it up like a lucky penny. On an afternoon in his studio in the Bronx, New York, he is surprised to learn that I didn't do the same when I encountered one recently. "Oh no, you take it," he says disapprovingly. "It's so sad no one was able to adopt those images." For Smith, these keepsakes represent an antidote to the scourge of iPhone photos; they are tactile and intimate yet anonymous.

The Jamaican-born artist is constantly filling his own albums with personal snapshots from his 35mm camera: a dinner party in London, Carnival festivities in Trinidad and Tobago, a beach day in St Thomas with his wife and children. Sometimes, he blows them up and uses them as the basis for large-scale compositions.

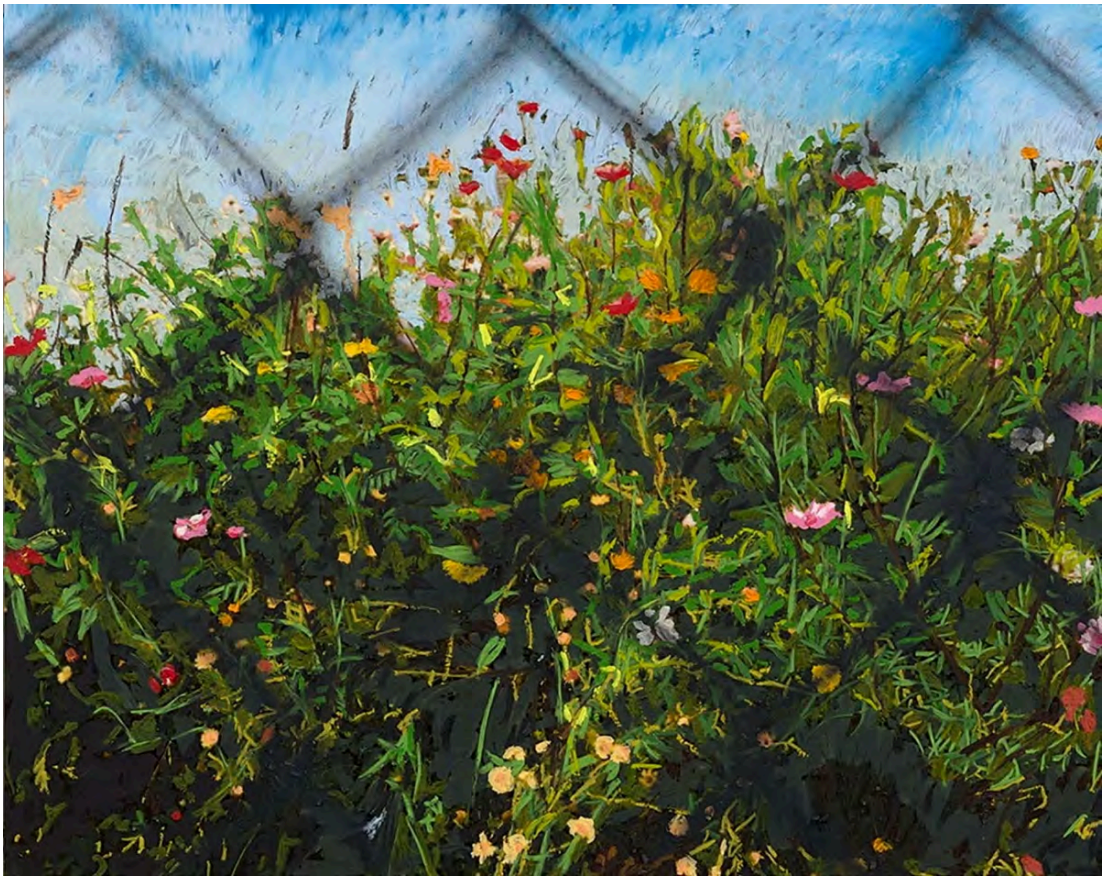
Smith's distinctive style comes from the way he adds layers — spray-painted chain-link fences, tiny holes in the shape of breeze blocks, three-dimensional objects such as flags — to create distance between the source image (always his own) and the viewer. For many artists, the medium is the message. For Smith, the *mediation* is the message. In other words, the way he obscures his imagery is just as important as the imagery itself. "Sometimes, it's like, 'Ah, I'm revealing too much,'" he says. "I pick over some of my works . . . to disguise and protect the information that's beneath."



Paul Anthony Smith goes through prints of some of the thousands of photographs he has taken on his 35mm camera © Lindsay Perryman for the FT

At Frieze London next week, Timothy Taylor Gallery will dedicate its entire booth to Smith's work, marking the 36-year-old's first solo presentation in the UK. Taylor describes Smith as "one of the most exciting young artists I've seen in a couple of years".

Smith's mention of disguising was referring to picotage, the novel technique for which he is best known. A portmanteau of "picking" and "collage" that originally referred to a French textile printing technique, the term also describes Smith's laborious process of puncturing the surface of an ink-jet print with a sharpened potter's needle over and over. (He studied ceramics at the Kansas City Art Institute, which refined his attunement to surface texture.) "I don't have assistants except for these 10 fingers," he notes. The repetitive process is so strenuous that he often sleeps with his right hand in a brace. But it is also effective. The ritual can turn figures into ghostly apparitions or add a shimmering, lenticular overlay that reframes the entire composition.



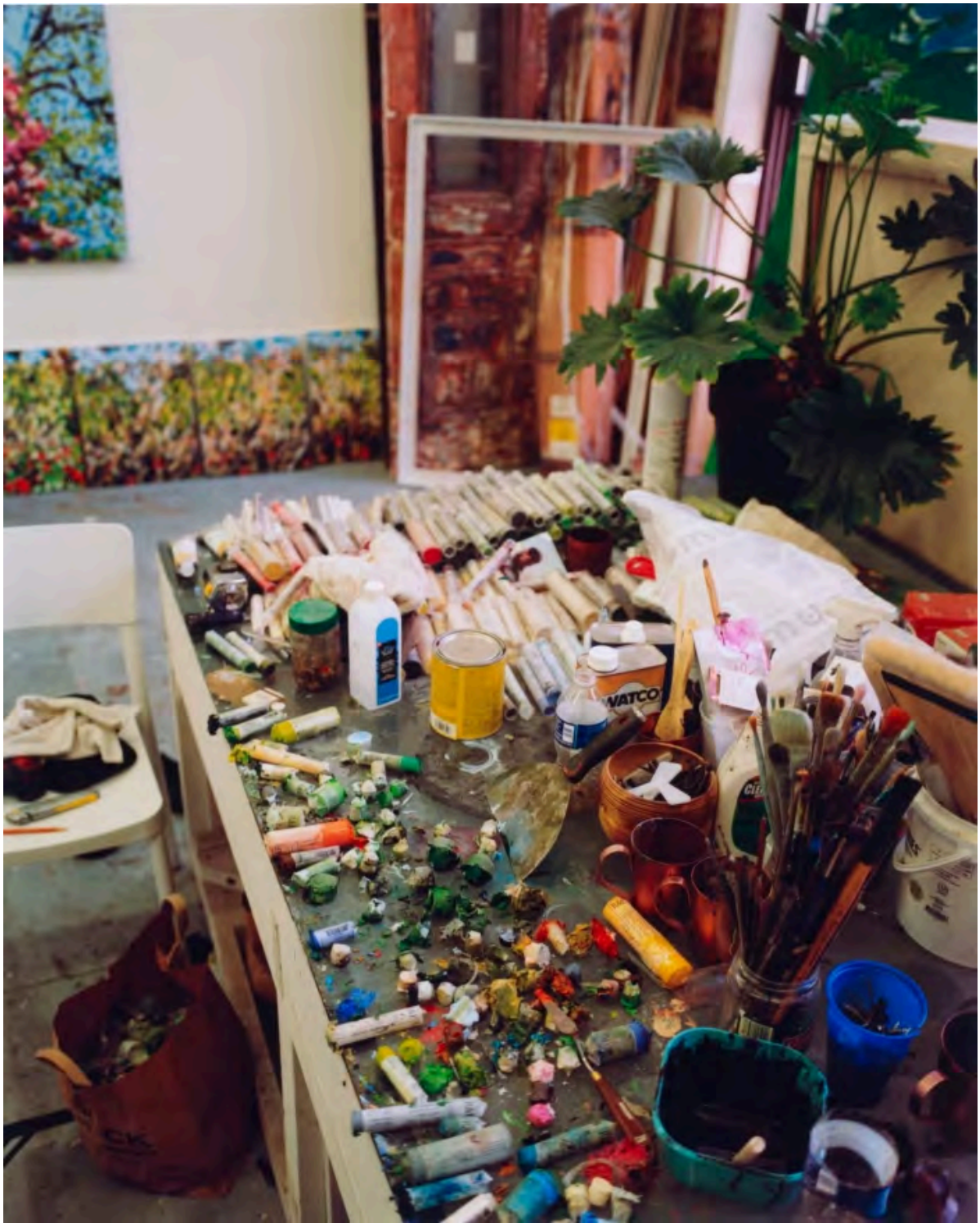
‘Dreams Deferred #72’, (2024), Paul Anthony Smith — many of Smith’s paintings see bucolic images obscured by chain-link fences © Courtesy the artist and Timothy Taylor © Paul Anthony Smith

At the fair, Smith will present several picotage works based on images he took of the ocean at sunrise while travelling across the Caribbean. The majority of the booth will be dedicated to thickly impastoed paintings of lush gardens, sometimes seen through a chain-link fence. Both bodies of work are informed by Smith’s identity as an immigrant — more specifically, the feeling of being simultaneously like an outsider looking in and an insider looking out.

Smith was born in Saint Ann’s Bay in 1988; his parents worked on cruise ships. After they split, his father moved to Florida and Smith followed aged nine. Often left in the care of his stepmother and four stepsiblings while his father travelled for work, Smith was an insider and outsider in his own home, as well as in his new country. His family was part of the Seventh Day Adventist church, following strict dietary rules and observing the sabbath. “I was always questioning religion and belief systems,” he says.

Smith’s picotage technique can turn figures into ghostly apparitions or add a shimmering, lenticular overlay that reframes the entire composition

Smith, who sports a bushy beard and a baseball hat, speaks like someone accustomed to translating his experiences for others. He loves a simile. Making an image on the wrong surface, he explains, is like wearing clothes that don’t fit; returning to a location and taking subpar pictures is like going to a restaurant and finding the food isn’t as good as you remembered. His art shares a similar impulse. “Everyone is trying to [be] like, ‘This is mine and this is yours,’” he says of his experience as an immigrant to the US. “I’m trying to visually pull people together.”



Smith's studio in the Bronx features different types of paint, pastel and adhesive being used to adapt his photographic prints © Lindsay Perryman for the FT

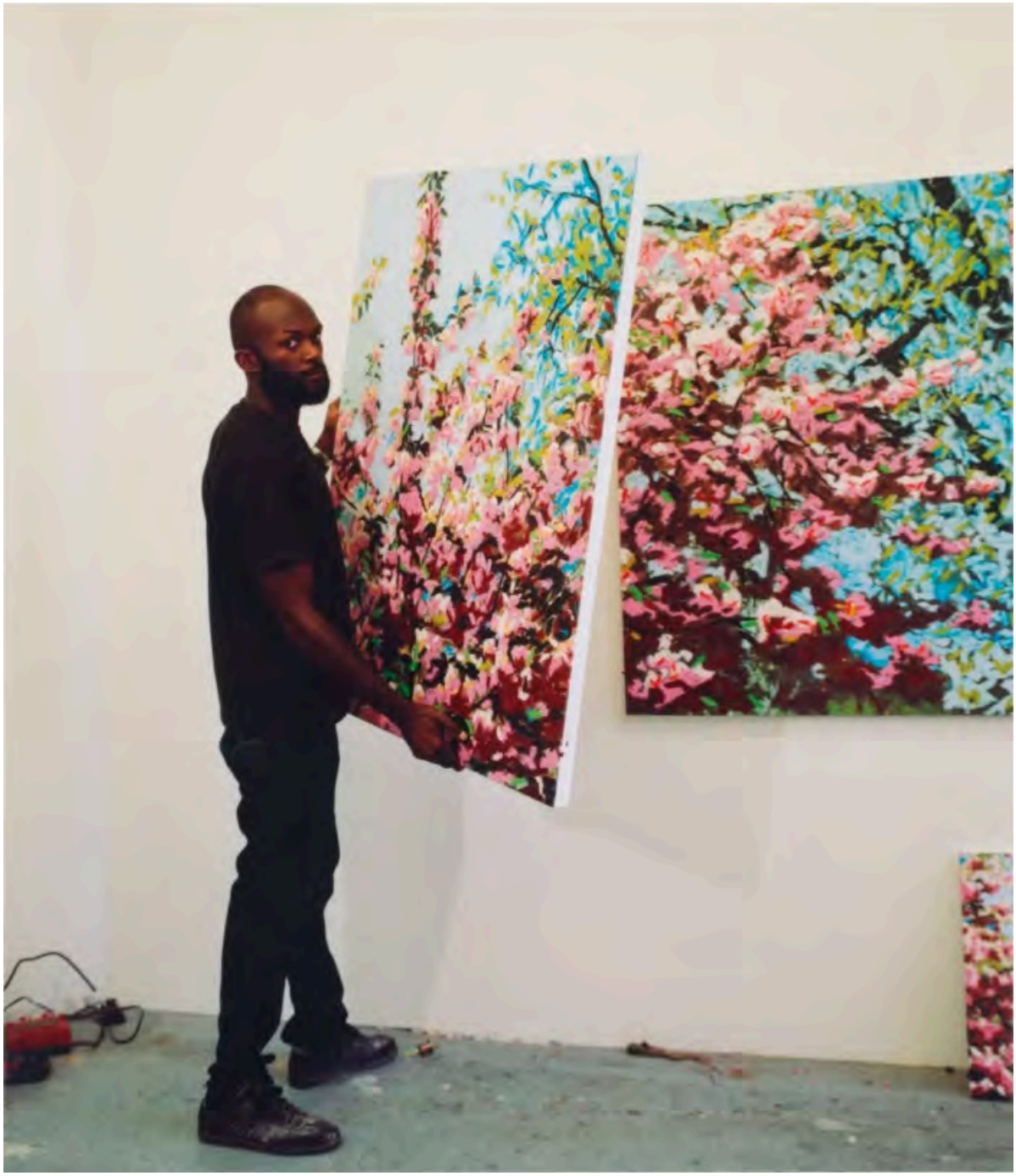
Smith's *Eye Fi Di Tropics* series at Frieze is also inspired by twin sensations: watching a boat approach from the shore and watching a shore draw near from a boat. (The latter, Smith notes, is an experience shared by his seafaring parents and colonising figures such as Christopher Columbus.) In recent years, Smith has travelled throughout the Caribbean taking photos of the water, "trying to understand how [locals] saw people coming into their lands".

These days, Smith is moving away from picotage and towards a looser, more improvisational mode of painting. The second body of work at Frieze, *Dreams Deferred*, is wild, tangled floral landscapes rendered in oil stick. Smith paints these lush scenes over photographs of gardens ranging from Versailles and Central Park to rangy, wildflower-dotted plots along highways.



'Eye Fi De Tropics, Grand Cayman' (2024) by Paul Anthony Smith © Courtesy the artist and Timothy Taylor © Paul Anthony Smith

The series, which takes its name from a Langston Hughes poem, began as a meditation on the fences and forces that keep people in and out of manicured spaces. (He got the idea from a fenced-in basketball court next to his former studio in Brooklyn.) For some of the works at Frieze, Smith abandoned the fence to focus solely on the flowers. "I love Arthur Jafa," he says, referring to the American artist whose recent work plumbs the seedy underbelly of American culture, "but sometimes I don't want to see those gory images, right?"



Smith mounting two of his thickly impastoed prints of cherry blossom © Lindsay Perryman for the FT

Smith is also well aware that florals are friendlier for an art fair, where viewers have hundreds, if not thousands, of images competing for their attention. If he were to return to the UK for a gallery show, he says, he would explore more Caribbean imagery and potentially come back to picotage. But it is important to him that those works, which take more than 10 hours each to make, are viewed slowly, without distraction. “People always ask about the time it takes to make them,” he says with a sigh. I ask if that question annoys him. “It takes a lifetime,” he replies.

Frieze London runs October 9-13, timothytaylor.com

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Art & Exhibitions(https://news.artnet.com/art-world/exhibitions)

A New Show of Collage by African-American Artists Finds Multiplicity in Black Identity

The medium offers a site for meditations on subjects like collective history, cultural hybridity and gender fluidity.



Lorna Simpson, *4 Walls* (2023). Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth, © Lorna Simpson

by Artnet News (https://news.artnet.com/about/artnet-news-) July 4, 2024

(https://www.addtoany.com/share#url=https%3A%2F%2Fnews.artnet.com%2Fart-world%2Fphillips-collage-african-american-artists-2504984&title=A%20New%20Show%20of%20Collage%20by%20African-American%20Artists%20Finds%20Multiplicity%20in%20Black%20Identity) Share

A museum exhibition opening in the nation's capital this summer explores the ways that Black artists use the century-old medium of collage to treat subjects ranging from national heritage to sexual orientation, from notions of beauty to fragmentation and reconstruction.

"Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage (https://www.phillipscollection.org/event/2024-07-06-multiplicity)" is billed as the first major museum exhibition devoted to contemporary collage and exploring the wide range of Black experience and identity in the U.S.



Paul Anthony Smith, *The Tales of Tourism* (2022-2023). Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, © Paul Anthony Smith.

Taking place at the Phillips Collection, in Washington, D.C., it comprises more than 60 works by a multigenerational cohort of some 45 artists. The show was organized by the Frist Art Museum, in Nashville, Tennessee.



Derek Fordjour, *Airborne Double* (2022). Courtesy of the artist, David Kordansky Gallery, and Petzel Gallery. Photo: Daniel Greer. © Derek Fordjour.

“Multiplicity” includes a pantheon of stars including Sanford Biggers, Mark Bradford, Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Lauren Halsey, Rashid Johnson, Kerry James Marshall, Wangechi Mutu, Howardena Pindell, Lorna Simpson, Mickalene Thomas, and Kara Walker.



Lester Julian Merriweather, *Moment (from #BetterGardensAndJungles)* (2017). Courtesy of the artist, © Lester Julian Merriweather.

“Twenty-first-century collage is an arguably understudied and undervalued medium, especially in museum exhibitions,” explained Katie Delmez, senior curator at the Frist Art Museum and the exhibition’s curator. “‘Multiplicity’ is an opportunity to spotlight the formal complexity and vibrancy of the technique and to assert its contributions to the field through the lens of some of today’s leading artists.”



Kara Walker, *Divining Rod* (2007). Courtesy Sikkema Jenkins & Co., © Kara Walker.

Collage originated with French Cubists and German Dada artists a century ago, and the tradition has been taken up in innovative ways by African-American artists such as Romare Bearden, David C. Driskell, Jacob Lawrence, and Faith Ringgold. Some of the artists in “Multiplicity,” like Mutu and Deborah Roberts, principally work in collage, while it’s just a part of the practice of many of the others.



Howardena Pindell, *Untitled #3C* (2009). Courtesy of the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, © Howardena Pindell.

“The exhibition asserts that collage parallels how identity is constructed with a multitude of elements that create a singular whole,” said Adrienne L. Childs, senior consulting curator at the Phillips Collection and organizing curator for the presentation in Washington. “The process of merging form and content aptly represents Black life. The artists create multifaceted works through the meaningful use of objects from their own lives that reflect their experiences and concerns.”



Lorna Simpson, *4 Walls* (2023). Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth, © Lorna Simpson.

A catalog further explores some of the ideas in the exhibition and includes essays by contributors such as UCLA African art assistant professor Tiffany Barber, Boston University art historian emerita Patricia Hills, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts curator Valerie Cassel Oliver, and Duke University art historian Richard J. Powell.

"Multiplicity: Blackness in Contemporary American Collage (https://www.phillipscollection.org/event/2024-07-06-multiplicity)" will be on view at the Phillips Collection, 1600 21st Street, NW, Washington, D.C.m July 6–September 22.

Artnet News
(https://news.artnet.com/about/artnet-news-)

THE BROOKLYN RAIL

Paul Anthony Smith: *Antillean*

By William Corwin

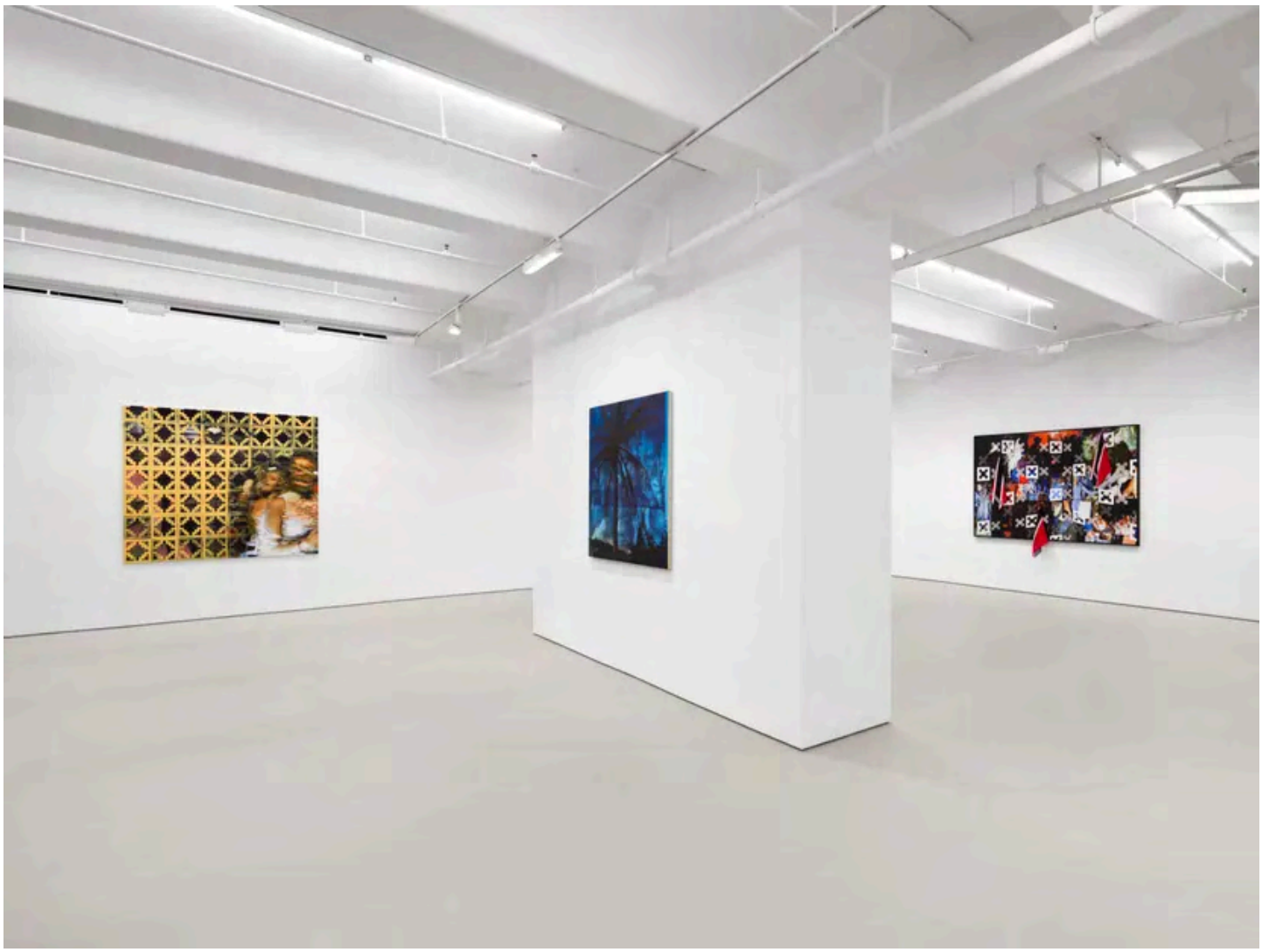


Paul Anthony Smith, *Eye Fi Di Tropics (St. Thomas)*, 2021–23. unique picotage and acrylic on inkjet print mounted on Dibond, 40 x 60 inches. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo: Dan *Bradica* Studio.

Do we think flags are innocent? In *Paramin Jab Molassie* (2024) Paul Anthony Smith affixes three black-white-and-red Trinidad and Tobago flags to a print which depicts elements of Caribbean Carnival. The flags hang over a mosaic of snapshots, some of

Antillean
Jack Shainman Gallery
September 5–October 26, 2024
New York

which are dark: all we see are the silhouettes of figures in a night parade. Other vignettes in the mosaic show dancers and revelers in the blue body paint and horn disguises of Jab Jab. These costumes have a demonic side, in contrast to the typical feather and sequin costumes we think we know of Carnival. Smith's new multimedia works, of which there are four in the current exhibition, seem to use the flag as a masking device. Are these flags covering up, or protecting these hidden rituals? Considering this use of flags, one thinks of Childe Hassam's naïve, yet beautiful, patriotism, or Jasper Johns's more introspective probing of a basic and very charged symbol. Paul Anthony Smith slips in somewhere halfway.



Installation view: *Paul Anthony Smith: Antillean*, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, 2024. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo: Dan Bradica Studio.

The flag is a sign of individuality and empowerment, especially in a Caribbean context, where a series of island nations have borne the brunt of tourism from a Euro-American world little interested in distinguishing among them. The flags are a way of saying who they are. But the general sensibility of *Paramin Jab Molassie* leans towards other, darker meanings. Smith's signature use of picotage—plucking at the surface of the print to produce patterns of small raised paper tears—produces a pattern of stocky squared Xs, almost like a political or heraldic insignia (think Greek or Maltese Cross). Flags are clannish, warlike symbols, and at heart they are colorful because they are violent: subtlety is counterproductive in war. Here, the flags, picotage patterns, and shadowy figures Smith pictures are the supposedly happy tourist destination islands showing their teeth.

Elation, ecstasy, and danger: in his pictage and flag paintings Smith is addressing the idea of the crowd, the actions of the masses and the subsidence of the individual. In *Untitled* (2024) there are grins and laughter, but also side-eye and upraised arms. With *Caricom* 2 (2022–23) Smith alternates his crowd images between black-and-white and color photography, creating a filmic quality that plays with temporality, as if some scenes were happing in the past while others are in the present. These moments are always flickering behind the

picotage barrier, decorative patterns of cinder block walls which let in light and air, a common architectural element on the islands. But they also prevent movement from one space to another. The most effective evocation of this separation is also the simplest. In *Untitled* (2024), a single frame shows brightly dressed revelers with LEDs in their hands whirling in blurry ellipses and fuzzy strokes, while a decorative barrier of slender lines and curlicues, a metal gate, neatly overlays the rectangle of the photographic print. The partition is almost invisible, and in its extended curlicues, also elegant. Here the alienated anthropology of colonialism, admiring but patronizing, keeping the other at arm's distance, is encapsulated.



Paul Anthony Smith, *Caricom 2*, 2023–24. Unique picotage on inkjet print, museum board, Dibond, acrylic paint, eye hooks, flags, 80 x 104 1/2 x 2 1/4 inches. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Photo: Dan Bradica Studio.

In addition to Smith's images of crowds, photo-based paintings of women and landscapes are also included here. *Mesh Marina* (2024) is a figure looking down, perhaps intent on dancing, or listening. Her dress is made of yellow tassels, which seem to throb, and her hoop earring is similarly distorted as it swings through the air. Smith is investigating the blur of movement, using painting to heighten the lack of detail, a seeming contradiction. In *Blabba Mout 2* (2024) three women intrude upon an expanse of patterned cinder block wall. The features of the figure in the foreground are delightfully grotesque as she's been caught turning her head: a mouth with heavy lipstick now spans the entire lower portion of her face and one eye is rendered simply a black hole. Similarly, her costume, whether sequins or more tassels, is represented as a cascade of undulating rivulets of color. The palm trees in *Final Hour (grey area)* (2017–24), *To be titled (grey area)* (2017–24), and *To be titled (grey area)* (2017–24) twitch and throb under Smith's hybridization of photo and painting, adding a foreboding quality to paradise.

As in his last exhibition, Smith bookends this show with two ironic Caribbean reveries: *Gods Eye (Jamaica)* (2023) at the start and *Eye Fi Di Tropics (St. Thomas)* (2021–23) at the conclusion. These are blinding sunsets that cast islands and palms in shadow, overlaid by doily-like picotage fences and gates. These images remind the viewer that although we will never have the artist's honest familiarity with these places, through his work we can learn a healthy respect for them that moves beyond misguided notions of paradise.

CONTRIBUTORS

William Corwin is a sculptor and writer based in New York. Besides the *Rail*, he writes regularly for *Art & Antiques* and *Art Papers*. He is an avid opera fan.

Jamaican artist explores displacement, home and the American Dream in new Glens Falls exhibit

BY MONICA SANDRECZKI (NEWS HOST, REPORTER) (/NEWS/REPORTERS/80/MONICA-SANDRECZKI)

Mar 07, 2024 —

The current art exhibit at the Hyde Collection, Glens Falls deals with colonialism, displacement and a sense of home.

Paul Anthony Smith is a multimedia artist, whose work is on display in a new exhibit called "Passage," (https://www.hydecollection.org/exhibition/paul-anthony-smith-passage/) at the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls. He was born in Jamaica and migrated to America as a kid is now based in New York City.

Monica Sandreczki
A conversation with Paul Anthony Smith



View Finder. Paul Anthony Smith.

"I'm making work that really looks at history and how do we try to continue to uplift each other," said Smith. "For me, it's more so trying to keep that vibrancy of what home was."

Much of his work features images of first and second generation Americans from the Caribbean and how they shape American culture. It's expressed in his series "Dreams Deferred," which is titled after Langston Hughes Poem of the same name.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up | Like a Raisin in the sun,

Or fester like a sore — And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over — like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags | like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?



Dreams Deferred #55. 81 3/4 x 121 3/4 inches (framed), Oil stick and spray paint on inkjet print, 2022.

He paints these fenced in floral beds as places of rest.

"It's about getting your flowers while you're here, not when you're gone," said Smith. What is the American dream? Is my dream even here right now as an artist and practicing what I do?"

His piece, "Dreams Deferred #55" is on display now at the Hyde Collection.





Islands #2. 60 x 40 inches (print) 60 3/4 x 48 7/8 x 1 7/8 inches (framed), unique picotage with spray paint on inkjet print, mounted on museum board and sintra, 2020-21
Dreams Deferred #46. 61 1/2 x 41 1/2 x 2 inches (framed), Oil sticks and spray paint on inkjet print mounted on Dibond, 2022.

PAUL ANTHONY SMITH: "You're unable to touch those flowers because you're pushed back. I think about these gardens often because that's how New York City seems. Everything seems like there's an obstacle to obtaining them. But when you do, you have to maintain what you have, it's own space. And what is that space? I'm an immigrant living abroad and I'm looking into this window and trying to understand what's happening because I'm now living in a different life and would like to be in that same environment that those people are enjoying that moment, sort of like those moments of leisure."

MONICA SANDRECZKI: "But it feels like there's not really actual access to those things?"

SMITH: "Right. Because I'm so distant from where home is and I think that's why I put those gates over [the flowers]. How do we think about access? How do we gain access? If the gate was a bit more open or had sort of an entryway and it would feel that unique. I just think about home often. Sometimes I get kind of complacent and look up the cost of flights to take off for a couple of days."



Dog an Duppy Drink Rum. 72 x 104 inches, unique picotage, spray paint and acrylic paint on inkjet print, mounted on museum board and sintra, 2020-21.

Smith frequently used as a technique that was traditionally used in textiles, called "picotage." It all starts with a bright photograph that he paints on top of.

SMITH: "It's often used in a lot of floral patterns. I'm using it in a way where I'm picking into the surface of the photograph where there's an underlying softer material which is a museum board. I'm using a sharp tool to pick in and pull up the surface of the photograph, which gives sort of like a textured Velcro-like surface that will able to create a new image on the top layer of the photograph. It's a new surface that's raised. It's more like paper sculpting."

SANDRECZKI: For attendees of the exhibit, what are you hoping they get out of it?

SMITH: "I'm hoping that the attendees come away with a new perspective of the Caribbean, what that place is. I want them to have feeling of awe when they leave."

Smith's exhibit, "Passage" is on display at the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls through June 2.



Untitled 4. 40 x 60 inches (print) 40 5/8 x 60 3/4 x 1 7/8 inches (framed), unique picotage with spray paint on inkjet print, mounted on museum board and sintra, 2020-21

Paul Anthony Smith Explores Diasporic Identity in “Antillean” at Jack Shainman Gallery

JESSE JAMES · SEPTEMBER 3, 2024



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

Jamaica-born, New York-based artist Paul Anthony Smith is set to unveil his latest solo exhibition, *Antillean*, at the renowned Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. This much-anticipated show delves deep into the complexities of diasporic identity, continuing Smith’s artistic exploration of the themes of unease, obscurity, and cultural heritage.

Antillean marks a significant departure from Smith’s previous work with still images, as he disrupts the pristine clarity typically associated with photographic art. Through a meticulous process of picotage and spray painting, Smith transforms his initial photographs—captured during the vibrant Carnival season in Trinidad and Tobago—into intricate, layered paintings that challenge the viewer’s perception and understanding.

One of the standout pieces in the exhibition, “Caricom 2,” showcases Smith’s ability to blend traditional Caribbean motifs with modern artistic techniques. The work features patterns reminiscent of Caribbean breeze blocks and

window grates, which Smith uses to explore the experience of "reading" an image. The interplay between these patterns and the photographic base creates a sense of ambiguity, inviting viewers to look beyond the surface and question the straightforward interpretation of visual information.

Throughout the exhibition, Smith employs recurring symbols—such as clouded sunsets, palm trees, and festive scenes—that evoke collective memories of the Antilles. However, these symbols are not presented as mere representational clichés; rather, they are interrogated and recontextualized within the framework of Smith's unique artistic process. By challenging the descriptive clarity of his images, Smith reflects on the nature of photography itself, proposing that photographs are not just vessels of information, but complex, layered representations of reality.

As the gallery notes, Smith's work is particularly resonant in today's information-saturated world, where the line between fact and interpretation is often blurred. *Antillean* encourages viewers to engage with art on a deeper level, prompting them to question their own assumptions and perceptions.

Paul Anthony Smith's *Antillean* will be on view at Jack Shainman Gallery from September 5 until October 26, 2024. Don't miss the opportunity to experience this thought-provoking exhibition that pushes the boundaries of photographic art and challenges our understanding of identity and representation.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY



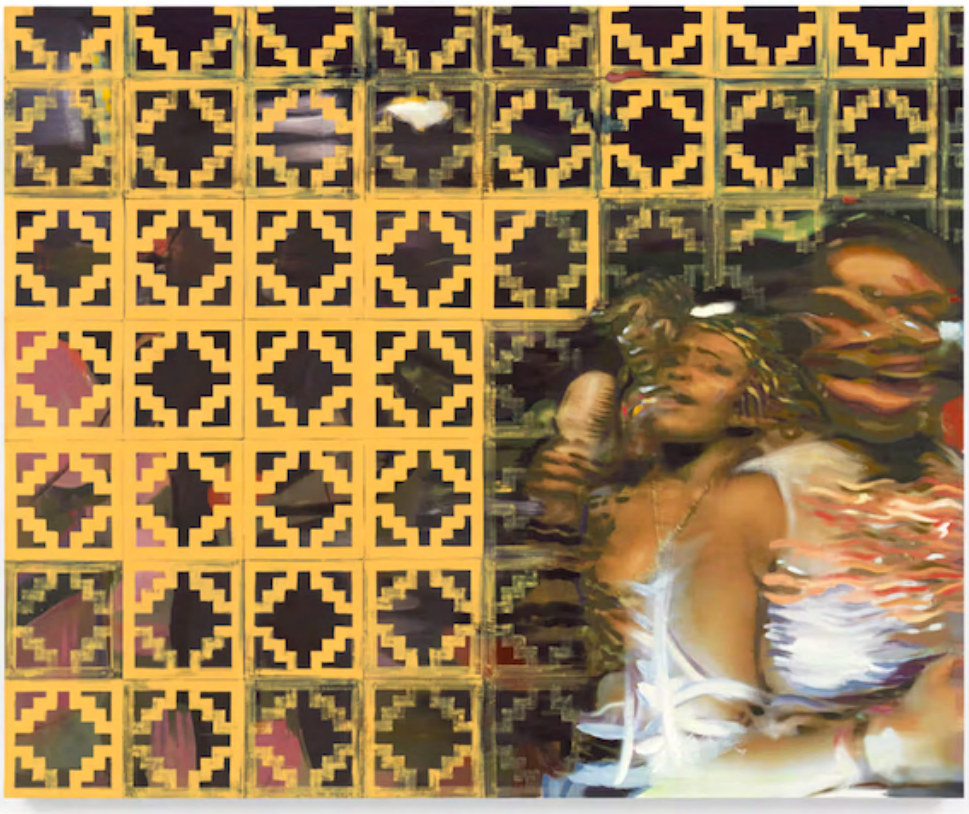
PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY



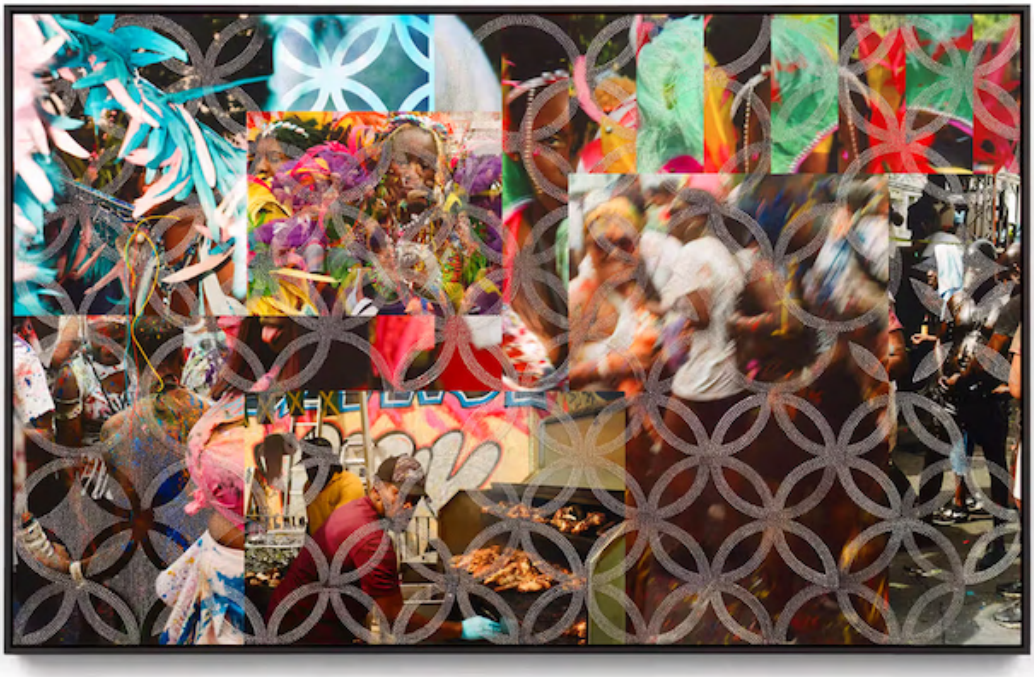
PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

HYPEBEAST

Paul Anthony Smith Distorts the Details in ‘Antillean’

1 of 7



Jack Shainman Gallery

Art August 29, 2024 257 0

Jamaica-born, New York-based artist, Paul Anthony Smith, will uncover his solo exhibition, *Antillean*, at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. The show continues Smith’s exploration of unease and obscurity within issues of diasporic identity. In a departure from still images, these paintings disrupt the crystal clarity of photographic information to invoke new ways of seeing.

The exhibition began as a series of photographs Smith captured during Carnival season in Trinidad and Tobago. The images, first printed on canvas or linen, underwent a series of picotage and spray paint treatments, as Smith complicates the simple translation of sharp photographs into literal meaning.

Standout works, such as “Caricom 2”, conjure patterns of Caribbean breeze blocks and window grates to underscore the experience of “reading” an image. In a collection of clouded sunsets, palm trees and celebrations, recurring symbols across the show both speak to collective experiences in the Antilles and interrogate their role as representational clichés.

“These cinematic details effectively become formal questions in Smith’s paintings through his process of challenging their descriptive clarity, allowing him to reflect on the photograph as merely a vessel of information,” says the gallery in a recent statement. “A fact, never as salient as during our information-saturated moment in history.”

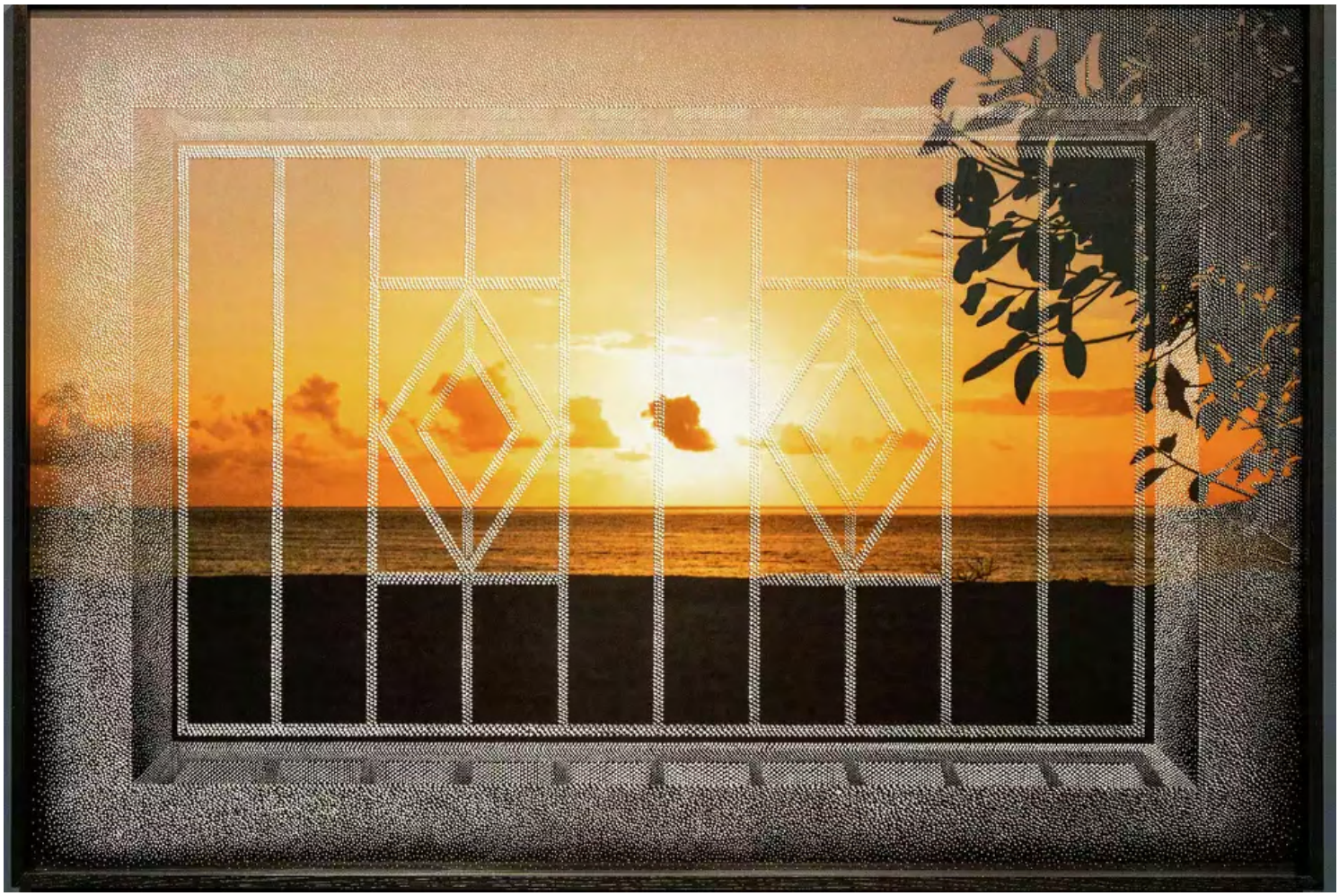
Antillean will be on view at Jack Shainman Gallery from September 5 until October 26, 2024.

Jack Shainman Gallery
513 West 20th Street
New York, NY

PREVIEW // ART + EXHIBITS

Colors, size, layers anchor Paul Anthony Smith solo show at Hyde

By **William Jaeger**
Feb 13, 2024



Paul Anthony Smith's "Eye di Tropics (Portland Holdings)" at the Hyde Collection. , 2023. Picotage and acrylic on inkjet print mounted on Dibond. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.
William Jaeger

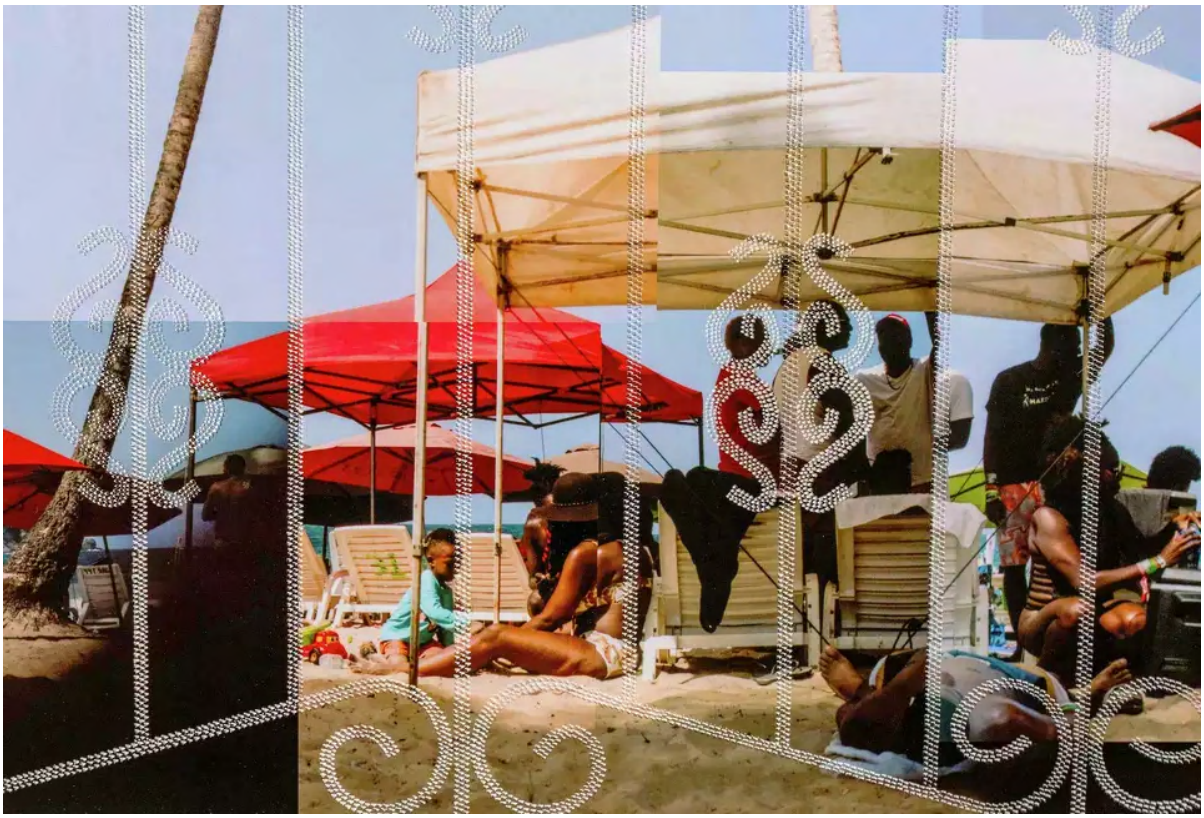
The large mixed-media photographic works by Paul Anthony Smith now at the Hyde are nothing if not beautiful. That is not a bad place to start. There are, certainly, layers of social meaning possible, and new kinds of laborious craft, but they wow you first with decorative and picturesque intensity.

So, “Passage” is a rich and rewarding solo show, made possible in cooperation with the Jack Shainman Gallery, which represents Smith. In fact, some of us might have first discovered Smith’s work at The School, Shainman’s Kinderhook gallery, and it is good to have this deeper look in such a flattering setting.



Installation view of Paul Anthony Smith exhibit at the Hyde.

William Jaeger



"View Finder" by Paul Anthony Smith.

William Jaeger

The base of most of these works, which can range over 6 feet in size, is a photograph, a big inkjet print. Some are richly saturated in bright colors evoking the Caribbean, which is where many of them seem to have been taken. On top of this is handwork — painting, or stippling with a small gouging tool in a technique the artist calls picotage.



Paul Anthony Smith's "Dreams Deferred #55."

William Jaeger

The most engaging works, for me, were the most excessive: bold colors, layers of paint, and further surface effects through picotage. “Kind of Blue #3” starts with a photograph of palm trees and beads that is already rather layered, and then a flat geometric pattern is added through extensive hand stippling, almost like a textured stencil. This pattern is something to look at, but it is also something to look through, and your eye does both, constantly.

Whether this work is referring to the famous Miles Davis album, I don’t know, but Smith does embed notions of Black history in his larger oeuvre. Three monochromatic amber photographs of oceans and harbors, overlain with picotage patterns something like the designs of leaded glass panes or of the sun and its rays of light, are simpler works that draw us straight to the Caribbean, and to Jamaica, where Smith is from. A quote from Langston Hughes on the wall, from his famous 1951 poem “Harlem,” reminds us also that Smith lives in New York. His personal history energizes his art.

Smith’s fascination with the ocean clarifies in some unusual works in one corner: a grid of similar black and white watercolors of various seas, horizon in the middle. There is pure sky above, pure water below. I immediately thought, “These are a total ripoff off Hiroshi Sugimoto’s photographs.” That’s because—duh—they *are* deliberate copies of those iconic images. And there is an extra twist that these are painted using residual inkjet printer inks.

These nine almost square paintings, all from 2023, reveal an artist crossing boundaries as he continues to expand his range. The results hover somewhere between emulation and adoration. They lack the absolutism of Sugimoto’s photographs, and they don’t divert us far from them either, being partly uncertain exercises in control. Even so, as studies or extended whims, they exhale a kind of serenity that only this kind of view, all sky and water, can evoke.



Detail of Paul Anthony Smith"s 2018 "Kind of Blue #3."

William Jaeger



Installation view of Paul Anthony Smith exhibit at the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls.

William Jaeger



Paul Anthony Smith's "View Finder," which was created over 2022-23.

William Jaeger



Paul Anthony Smith's untitled seascapes are a nod to Hiroshi Sugimoto’s photographs.

William Jaeger

So I return to one of the larger works that wowed me most, “View Finder,” a vivid color photograph with picotage designs over the top. This adds yet another element of complexity, which you might not notice at first — the image of people under huge parasols under tall palm trees on a sunny beach is made of up many individual photographs that don’t properly line up. It’s like those David Hockney images made of overlapping snapshots, and it gives the scene and the work additional energy.

There are reminders everywhere that Smith is steeped in photography and its history, that he’s partly a photographer at heart. And in the photographs here, there’s always the horizon, a simple line, the blue sea meeting the blue sky far behind, wordlessly anchoring it all.



By **William Jaeger**

Feb 13, 2024

HOME · FASHION

Chanel And Tribeca Film Festival Announce 2024 Artist Award Program

For its 19th year, the program encouraging all art forms is gifting each winner of the program with an art piece.



TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

BY KERANE MARCELLUS · UPDATED MAY 23, 2024

Chanel has teamed up with the Tribeca Film Festival which celebrates filmmakers and artists alike to announce this year's Artist Awards Program. Both Chanel and the Tribeca Festival

have been in partnership for 19 years since its founding in 2001 by stars and creatives Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal, and Craig Hatkoff.

This year, each winner is receiving a piece of art by artists Juliana Huxtable, Jenny Holzer, Erick and Elliot Jiménez, Deborah Kass, Glenn Ligon, Joiri Minaya, José Parlá, Maia Cruz Palileo, Paul Anthony Smith, and Tourmaline. The pieces by each artist range from oil on canvas paintings, to multimedia imagery, photography, and collages.

"Tribeca and Chanel recognize the undeniable impact diverse artists can have when their work and stories are in the spotlight," said Jane Rosenthal, Tribeca Festival co-founder and CEO, to *Variety*. "We are dedicated to celebrating creativity and culture, championing diverse voices, and encouraging the development of a new generation of visionaries," she added.

Article continues after video.



Gifting art to these winning filmmakers bridges a gap in art mediums and showcases a true connection and appreciation for all art forms and their intersections. The curator of each

gifted art piece Racquel Chevremont explained this in a statement about the program. One of the artists, Kass, shared their excitement about this gifting saying in a statement, "This award shows a sense of community and support for the artist... art comes from the need to document one's times and place...there's nothing like the exchange between artists across mediums, especially here in New York." Each winner's gift will be on display at the Tribeca Festival Hub located in Spring Studios.

Chanel will host a panel entitled "Championing the Next Generation" on June 7 at 4 p.m. EST at the Crosby Street Hotel in conjunction with the "Through Her Lens" program for femme filmmakers. The full festival will be held from June 5 to June 16, with plenty of time to view an array of films that touch on diverse subjects including fashion like Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Trish Dalton's docufilm *Diana von Furstenberg: Woman in Charge.*

To attend the upcoming Tribeca Festival go to tribecafilm.com to purchase tickets, and passes, plus to learn more about the schedule and filmmakers featured.

Below take a look at a few key art pieces that will be a part of the gifting.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH COURTESY OF ANDRE D. WAGNER

ANTON LEE

Exhibition Review: *Paul Anthony Smith: Standing In*

Paul Anthony Smith: Standing In. Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston, Houston TX. October 22, 2022–March 12, 2023.

Photography's relationship to its subject has often been explained through the metaphor of skin. Skin demarcates the borders where our body meets the external world, thus serving the purpose of visual identification, on the one hand, and functioning as a façade for disguise and self-expression on the other. Photography, owing to the widespread belief in its accuracy, is commonly associated with the ability to apprehend things and people, and classify them into specimens and types. It is in this context that one of the early inventors of the stereoscope, Oliver Wendell Holmes, proposed in 1859 to flay every surface of the world with the aid of the camera, just as men would hunt cattle for their beautiful skins in South America.[1]

This understanding of photography, however, comes with the caveat that its supposed truthfulness can only be skin deep. In other words, skin is also a veil on which ideas and aspirations are projected to take advantage of that presumed link between appearance and inner truth. Thus, for the nineteenth-century abolitionist Frederick Douglass, photography was a tool to actively externalize one's selfhood into visible form. From this perspective, taking respectable pictures of oneself is not very different from painting desirable clothing directly on the skin, as Douglass noted about a "savage" tribe.[2] Identification and/or expression—the two conflicting takes on photography's kinship to skin—are rivetingly explored in the exhibition of the work of Paul Anthony Smith currently at Blaffer Art Museum at the University of Houston.

Paul Anthony Smith: Standing In is the latest survey of the artist's burgeoning career and is comprised of thirty-one works made between 2012 and 2022. Currently based in Brooklyn, New York, Smith was born and raised in Jamaica and moved to Miami, Florida, at the age of nine. The current exhibition summarizes a decade of his practice as a professional artist following his graduation from the Kansas City Art Institute in Missouri, where he studied ceramics. Perhaps for this reason, the exhibition is full of

1. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," *Atlantic Monthly* 3, no. 20 (June 1859), 748.

2. Frederick Douglass, "Pictures and Progress" (c. 1865), in John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth-Century's Most Photographed American* (New York: Liveright, 2015), 168.

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dynamic tension between relentless introspection and the ambition to expand. The works showcase daring experiments geared toward technical diversification, which avoid being superficial thanks to the artist's thought-provoking engagement with the issues of identity, immigration, and diaspora.

Smith's main medium is photography, although it quickly becomes clear that he aims to challenge its specificity. In many instances, he treats photography as an essentially popular and democratic technology by utilizing images that are quotidian or copied from magazines and other illustrated pages, and the medium's reproducibility allows him to transfer, enlarge, and serialize these images onto different surfaces. But then, he constantly draws inspiration from other genres of fine arts in order to transform each of his creations into a unique, one-off artwork. This is achieved by the mélange of photography with painting, sculpture, textiles, and perhaps most importantly the technique of "picotage." Here, a further explanation of picotage might be useful, as it has become the artist's trademark.

Picotage is originally a printing technique used for textile manufacturing beginning in the late eighteenth century in Europe. Short pins made of brass wire were hammered into woodblock—like a bristle brush—to form stipple patterns for rendering shadows, a gritty background, and contours of floral and foliage details.[3] Smith has appropriated this technique in a unique manner, by repurposing a ceramist's tool for piercing and lifting small spots on photographic prints to add a shallow blanket of protrusions on top. The result emulates fish scales rubbed the wrong way, which still show the original photographs from one side, but obscure it from the other side, similar to a lenticular postcard. Combined with the shimmering finish of the prints themselves, the picotage technique solicits a phenomenological experience from the viewer, who cannot help but move around the frames as if playing hide and seek with the image. Throughout the exhibition, the method of picotage functions as the driving force behind the game of revelation and concealment, which is intensified when joined by different textures of oil and spray paint, for example.

The exhibition is roughly divided into five large and small rooms and corridors, the arrangement of which do not follow a chronological order. Instead, Steven Matijcio, Jane Dale Owen Director and Chief Curator of the museum, organized the spaces to foreground important shifts in Smith's work, tracing the evolvement of the picotage technique across various stages. While walking through the display, viewers witness how the artist changed the base material for his picotage works from found images to his own photographs; how his works grew in dimension from palm-size prints to canvases stretched from floor to ceiling; how the themes of immigration and diaspora were introduced by the motifs of walls, fences, and landscape; and how the picotage

3. Edwin A. Barber, "Printed Textiles," *Bulletin of the Pennsylvania Museum* 9, no. 34 (April 1911): 28; Hanna E.H. Martinsen, "Fashionable Chemistry: The History of Printing Cotton in France in the Second Half of the Eighteenth and First Decades of the Nineteenth Century," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 2015, 163, 318, https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/82430.

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Ras (2013) by Paul Anthony Smith; courtesy Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas; gift of the H Tony and Marti Oppenheimer Foundation.

marks started to form a layer of image that would exist almost independently from the base photographs.

The earliest application of Smith's picotage technique is shown in *Systems of Hierarchy* (2012), a work featuring four found photographic images. Here, the repeated jabbing creates rough granite-like patterns that engulf historic figures, including Haile Selassie I, the revered Emperor of Ethiopia who inspired the Rastafari movement in Jamaica, as well as politicians involved in the Congo Crisis of the 1960s including Joseph Kasa-Vubu, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, and Moïse Tshombe. It is telling that the found images show

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military uniforms and ethnic garments that are meant to display certain identities on the exterior. At the same time, Smith has covered every figure's face with picotaged balaclava, making them anonymous and protected. The historical reference continues in *Ras* (2013), where the face of Ras Makonnen Woldemikael (Selassie's father) is covered with a picotaged Ngady aMwaash, a type of mask worn during masquerade ceremonies by Kuba people in southeastern Congo. The ornate geometric details of the mask completely disguise the figure's identity to the extent of misrepresenting Ras's Ethiopian origin.

"Irritated" is perhaps the correct term to describe the surface of these earlier works, in which white pulp fibers are exposed in irregular lumps like skin rashes. This formlessness propelled Smith to use colored pencils for clarifying contours and patterns in *Ras*, for example. He would later solve this problem by mounting inkjet prints on museum board, rather than performing picotage directly on photographs printed on paper. This means that every pinch would reveal the bright white, foamy flesh of the thick board, so as to realize the graphic potentials of picotage as an imaging technology. A good example is the bosselated layer of brick block patterns in the *BB* series (2016), where the picotage strokes literally put up a wall that prevents the viewers from recognizing already blurred figures in the photographs. Fascinatingly enough, however, this barrier is in and of itself a low-relief picture that amuses our visual and tactile senses.

The improvement of graphic qualities continues in the selection of large silkscreened canvases made in 2015 and 2017 as part of the series *Grey Area* (2015–17). Despite the absence of plucking, the exaggerated grains of halftone patterns in this series suggest a link to the original purpose of picotage in the textile industry for visualizing a range of shades with monotonous specks. This would eventually lead to the application of picotage for rendering a gradual change of tonality on garments and skins in Smith's later works, made after 2020. Such a prioritization of visuality also benefits from the expansive size of the canvases in *Grey Area*, which reminds me of the silkscreen or image transfer paintings by Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg. Similarly, Smith enlarges, rotates, and overlaps different photographic images in *Grey Area*, in compliance with Leo Steinberg's notion of the "flatbed picture plane"—the pictorial space reimagined as a horizontal surface for assembling information.[4] Some of the comprehensible images in this series show people photographed at the funeral of the artist's uncle in Jamaica. Here, the photographs are not considered as the objective documentation of reality, but as a means for picture-making and visualization. As a consequence, the autobiographical impetus of Smith's practice finds its visual form only in an abstract and jumbled fashion, emulating the confused accumulation of faded memories.

Smith pushes his experiment one step further in *So What* (2016), where he accomplishes sophisticated control over the alignment of individual picotage marks. By manipulating the direction of the punctures, he halves the rectangular block motif into triangular wedges, reminiscent of the flags of Afro-Caribbean nations including Jamaica and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Depending on the viewer's position, the

4. Leo Steinberg, *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 82–91.

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So What (2016) by Paul Anthony Smith; courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

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picotaged triangles hide or reveal certain parts of a carnival dancer and her feathered costume photographed by Smith at the West Indian Day Parade in Brooklyn.

As such, the image composed of the picotage dots interferes with the photograph's content in a meaningful way: the dancer's connection to her Caribbean heritage simultaneously defines and confuses her visibility and, by extension, her identity here and now. This is perhaps the most poignant materialization of Smith's picotage technique and its ontological effect, for it perfectly visualizes what I would call the diasporan mode of living.

Upon leaving the native soil, a person suddenly becomes an outsider to one's own culture and people, and this feeling of alienation is never fully compensated by the adopted country. This feeling of not quite belonging anywhere is one every immigrant knows by heart. In a way, being an immigrant means becoming half present and half absent at once, like a translucent ghost who incessantly oscillates between states of disappearance and reappearance. It is telling that Smith visualizes this understanding by revisiting his earlier photographs of Jamaican people in the *Walk Bout* series (2013–20). In these small retouched photographs, Jamaican passers-by are covered from head to toe with white picotage speckles, which disrupt their identities so effectively that the figures resemble glitches or static noise against the anonymous dark background.

The tantalizing game of transparency and opacity gets much more complicated in Smith's large picotage works created after 2020. There, photographic prints provide recognizable images with a reflective sheen, which is interrupted by the neatly repeated



Dog an Duppy Drink Rum (2020–21) by Paul Anthony Smith; courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

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waves of picotage scars that look almost mechanical. These are joined by the brushstrokes of oil paint that reassert the artist's gestures, while spray paint once again conceals everything behind its velvety coating. All of these elements can be found in *Dog an Duppy Drink Rum* (2020–21), which is one of the most memorable pieces in the show. The work seems peculiar not only for the artificiality of the figures whose shadows are retouched to appear as flattened cardboard cutouts; it also stands out due to the inclusion of a human form spray-painted in black, whose presence is made known through the total lack of visual content and shimmer, ironically.

It is not difficult to connect this anthropomorphic entity to death and specters, given the word "duppy" in the title—a haunting, often malevolent spirit in West Indian folklore—or the fact that the photograph was taken during Dead Yard, an extended celebration of life in the Caribbean funerary tradition. One may extend this interpretation to the series of murders that expanded the Black Lives Matter movement to a global scale in 2020.[5] As an embodiment of mortality, this shadowy figure seems to reference what Roland Barthes once identified as the ultimate message of all photographs: this person is going to die and so am I. According to Barthes, the photograph "pricks" the viewer upon realizing the inevitability of that catastrophe, and he names that "sting, speck, cut, little hole" the photograph's "punctum."[6] This theoretical context unveils a surprising connotation of Smith's technique, as "picotage" has its etymological origin in "piquer" or "to prick," which is the precise word used by Barthes. And yet, unlike the passive position of Barthes as a critic, Smith the artist reclaims an active role by adorning his photographs with scars. His picotage stabs can be compared to the sacrificial markings inflicted on the skin in many African cultures or the blades and nails pierced into the power figure of a *Nkisi Nkondi* by Kongo people for carrying out justice and protection. The arduous act of picking at the photographs has almost talismanic implications, whether undoing the racist biases built into the photographic technology or providing the photographed subjects with body armor and disguise. These are the practices of embellishment and expression, in defiance of being apprehended and labeled, to refer back to the two views of photography presented earlier. It is in this context that, whereas Barthes's "punctum" reminds of death, Smith's picotage spurs the energy of life. ■

ANTON LEE is an art historian specializing in the history and theory of photography and is currently a visiting assistant professor at the University of Houston.

5. Angela Vuilla, "Paul Anthony Smith Reanimates the Dead in Resonant New Series of Photographs," *Artnews*, March 15, 2021, www.artnews.com/art-news/artists/paul-anthony-smith-jack-shaiman-tradewinds-exhibition-12345861 41.

6. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 27, 96.

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The New York Times Style Magazine

Art School Confidential

David Salle, Miranda July, Mariko Mori and others talk about their experiences attending (or leaving or forgoing) the academy.

Paul Anthony Smith, mixed-media artist and painter, 34

Kansas City Art Institute, B.F.A., class of 2010



Paul Anthony Smith as a sophomore in a ceramics studio at the Kansas City Art Institute in 2007.

I'm originally from Jamaica, and growing up, I became fascinated by the comics in the evening newspapers that would be distributed throughout the community. I remember seeing a lot of Flintstones drawings. I would copy them and draw around them and scratch them out. I was around 4 or 5 or 6. I still keep my second-grade sketchbooks with me. In third grade, I discovered clay. I understood how it worked because my aunts used to make soup and they'd use flour dough to patch the pots when they cracked — they roasted the dough over the flame so it became this hard callus that kept the liquid from spewing out. Fast-forward a few years to when I moved to America — I always thought if I did that I'd try to become a full-time artist. I went to an arts magnet school in Miami called New World School of the Arts. Before that, I was in another magnet art program in middle school. All of these little things helped to propel me to the next stage.



A Flintstones-themed childhood drawing of Smith's, made circa 1995. © Paul Anthony Smith, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



An untitled painting Smith made when he was a 17-year-old high school student. © Paul Anthony Smith, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

In high school, I decided to attend college in the Midwest because I wanted to know what America was really all about. I'd applied to schools such as Pratt, RISD, S.A.I.C., Cleveland Institute of Art. I don't think I applied to Cooper Union. But the place that really appealed to me was the Kansas City Art Institute [in Missouri] because it was in a quieter place and I liked the country atmosphere. While there, I decided to study painting, but I didn't like what I saw coming from the painting department, so I ended up majoring in ceramics. I was attracted to the scale of the kilns because of their relationship to ovens and cooking. I thought, "Oh, I can use these large ovens to cook." So that led to me doing these large ceramic sculptures for those few years at school.



Smith's "Aristocratic Black Man" (2009), which he made his junior year at Kansas City Art Institute. © Paul Anthony Smith, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.



"The Birthing Process" (2010), another one of Smith's college-era works. © Paul Anthony Smith, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

The thing about art school is that it's kind of like you're going to a technical school. It creates skills and you learn how to use tools — you learn how to make things from scratch, and you learn how to communicate to figure out what you want.

What's funny about that is, I personally feel now as an artist that I need a lot of time alone. I don't really have any mentors and I'm kind of a recluse. I just try to stay in the studio as much as I can. But learning to communicate is still important.

What was special for me, too, was that there were museums on both sides of the school — the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, where I currently have a show, and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, which offered internships and summer jobs. For me, it was always about learning to survive, and I always had a lot of jobs while doing a paid internship or a work-study. Because I had skills, I found places to fit myself in. I hear a lot of people say they don't see themselves in a certain environment, but as a Black person living in Kansas City who knew nothing about America other than what I'd been told, I decided to have blinders on and be open and accept what I was offered. I left Kansas City having worked at all the museums there. So I think college is important if you want to learn specific skills. But later I prioritized making art — I didn't go into an M.F.A. program after I got my bachelor's degree, because I really wanted to think about

what I was doing. That's when I made a U-turn — I stopped taking assignments, decided to make use of what I had learned, went home to Jamaica for a while and began making work about the Caribbean, a marginalized place, but a place of opportunity nonetheless. And that's what a lot of my work still deals with: Caribbean ecosystems, their issues, what's beautiful. School taught me to write down my dreams and attack them, that they turn to dust if you don't.

ARTnews

March 15, 2021
By Angelica Villa

Paul Anthony Smith Reanimates the Dead In Resonant New Series of Photographs



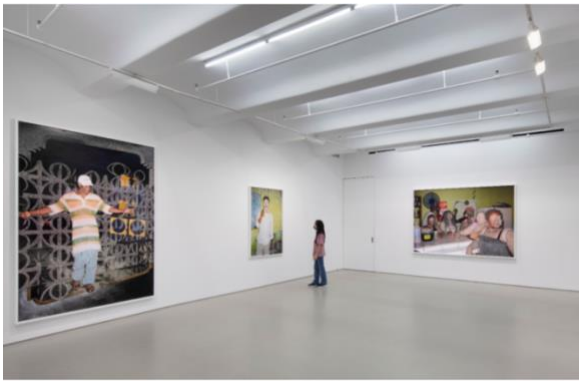
Paul Anthony Smith, *Dog an Duppy Drink Rum*, 2020-21. JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY.

In **Paul Anthony Smith**'s work, people of Caribbean descent congregate against shimmering surfaces. Deploying his signature picotage technique, which involves distressing his photographs' prints so that they shine, the figures in his photographs seem both present and not, almost like ghostly specters.

Made over the past year, Smith's latest body of work, on view at **Jack Shainman** Gallery in New York through April 3, reflects not only on the ongoing pandemic and the global protests sparked this past summer after the police killing of George Floyd but also on the death of two family members. His images become mediations on the rituals of death and mourning, both in private spaces and the public sphere.

Smith's photo-based works such as these are highly specific—they are deeply embedded within local traditions. Even so, he leaves the people who appear before his lens anonymous. "They're part of my lived experience of being behind a camera," Smith said in an interview. "They're connected to me." His images become "fragmented parts of my life," and viewers are left to uncover the stories surrounding them.

To make his latest works, Smith relied on a ceramic tool, which he used to puncture the surface of photographic paper. When light hits his images, the paper appears to gleam, turning daytime and nighttime scenes—each populated by images of community members of Port Antonio, Jamaica and relatives gathering for a funeral—luminous.

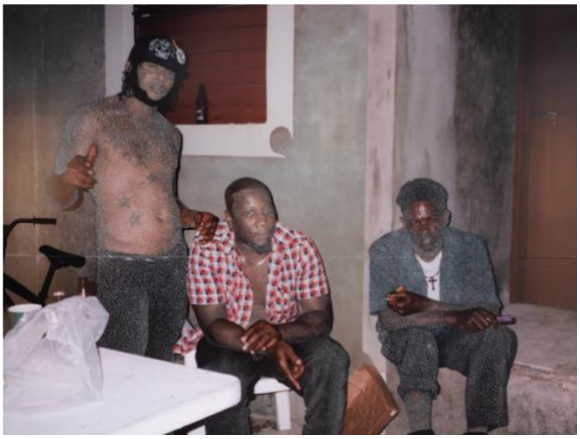


Paul Anthony Smith, “Tradewinds” installation at Jack Shainman, New York, February 2021. JACK SHAINMAN.

Born in Jamaica, Smith moved to Miami as an adolescent, and later pursued a BFA at the Kansas City Art Institute, where he studied ceramics. His chosen medium these days, however, is something much different: photography. Having shown his work at the Dan Cameron–organized Open Spaces biennial in Kansas City in 2018, he was added to Jack Shainman’s roster soon after, and had his first show there in 2019. He has been on the rise ever since, and he said he considers his latest work “an extension of my life.”

Smith, who is now based in Brooklyn, documented trips to Jamaica, Trinidad, and London over the past year. The artist selected the images he used from hundreds of pictures, and each bears out specific references to local culture. *Untitled (Dead Yard)*, from 2020, for example, refers a the Caribbean funerary tradition known as the ninth night, which involves a days-long wake that usually begins once the sun goes down, with guests arriving around 10 p.m. (Its name refers to the point when the dead depart the living forever.) On these occasions, Smith said, graveyards are lively despite the morbid circumstances.

In the image taken in a Jamaican port city, a funeral-goer stands against a picotaged fence with a sound system behind him, his arms stretched open, in a gesture that recalls a warm welcome or a crucifix, according to Smith. His goal had been to portray the range of emotions that accompany death on the ninth night. “One’s life doesn’t end there—it goes on,” he said. “The only thing is, you’re not present for that party.”



Paul Anthony Smith, *Untitled*, 2020-21. JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY.

Before the pandemic hit in March 2020, Smith also planned to visit various other Caribbean islands to survey their scenes. But, with travel restrictions in place, he was instead forced to work with the images he already had. He made the final images using 35mm film, scanning the contact prints and collaging the digital version, to manipulate the original “in a way I think they should be composed,” he said, so as to “break [the figures] down and disguise them.”

Throughout the new project, Smith was preoccupied by thoughts of departing by boat and traveling between Caribbean locales. In his mind, aspects of his family history, like his parents' time working on cruise ships, mingled with musings on postcolonial Caribbean life. (The exhibition's title, "Tradewinds," alludes to the routes used by trade ships that enabled colonial expansion into the Americas.) He also considers the economic factors affecting networks of people living between the two regions, which often result in communities reliant on income from family members in the U.S. An immigrant and a U.S. citizen, Smith said, "I am still thinking about how I fit in both places. All these male figures are sort of an exterior [version] of me."

Postcolonial thinkers like Stuart Hall and Frantz Fanon have become key in Smith's process. "You never really feel fully one thing or the other," Smith said. "Baldwin felt most American when he was in France; with Fanon, he realized how much of a Martinican he was when he was overseas. There are these little nuances of recognizing that someone is not from a place. How you talk, how fast you move, how you stand up. If you look too put together. There are just various nuances that I experience back home that I find strange, because as much as I think that I am from there and these are my people, there is always something that gets called out."

Ghosts were also on Smith's mind during the making of the series. According to the funerary tradition of the ninth night, the spirit of the dead is said to pass during the ceremony. Another image, titled *Dog and Duppy Drink Rum* (2020–21), depicts 10 men standing together for what feels like a group portrait. (In Caribbean folklore, a duppy is a malevolent spirit.) At the far left, there is a nearly undetectable silhouetted figure standing in the background, a dog crossing between his legs. That ghostly figure, Smith said, is a reference to "loss and the absence of various people"—and the artist sees an uncomfortable parallel for this in the fact that those pictured will not see the images from the New York show. "Here I am, making these works for the white cube space with these Black people, but I'm not showing them the work," he said.



Paul Anthony Smith, *Untitled*, 2020-2021. JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY.

The bulk of Smith's latest works feature male subjects, and Smith said he felt compelled to focus on them because of the dominance of U.S. media coverage of violence against Black men. Looked at in this context, even Smith's images featuring "day-to-day" imagery, as he put it, take on a darker context. An untitled portrait of a friend, depicted in an armchair facing the camera, shows the sitter pre-pandemic. Since then, that unnamed man contracted Covid-19, fell into a coma, and has since recovered.

Smith describes subjects such as that friend as "stand-ins," even though he often knows them well. "I use them as placeholders." The works' subjects function as "props for others to understand," he explained, adding, "When you are using a camera, it's somewhat autobiographical. I am behind it, and this is like my biography being distilled."

And as he took the pictures and later picked over the works with a ceramic tool on their prints, he found himself reconsidering death itself. He thought of the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor,

and how their images were circulated so widely. “That is what we’re living with this year. There are a lot of images that get carried around of dead people,” Smith said, in a statement that could also apply to his own work. “They become icons in a way.”

ELEPHANT

March 2, 2021
By Ravi Ghosh

Paul Anthony Smith Picks Away at Photos to Reveal the Inner Lives of His Subjects

“I’m using various patterns of disguise.” In Tradewinds, the Jamaica-born artist uses a picotage technique to trace migration beyond the labels of colonialism.



Islands #4, 2020-1. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

During the age of transatlantic slavery, trade winds allowed sailors to cross the oceans with greater efficiency at different times of the year. Travel from Europe or Africa to the Americas benefited from these seasonal winds, creating systems of westwards movement either side of the equator, and forever entwining the practice of slavery with Earth’s meteorology.

Migration—both forced and unforced—has been a major influence for Paul Anthony Smith, whose latest exhibition of photography-based works borrows its title from these natural cycles. Smith’s practice seeks to reconcile the differences between populations, cultures, landscapes and languages that have been displaced or partitioned by colonialism. He casts his lens from east to west Jamaica; Aruba to Barbados; and on the Caribbean diasporas of London and New York. He retraces historic patterns of movement, but empowers his subjects to exist beyond these colonial labels.



Paul Anthony Smith, Dog an Duppy Drink Rum, 2020-1. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

“I think about these people that I show occupying spaces and being themselves and being explorers and travellers,” Jamaica-born Smith tells me from New York City. He shoots subjects in a range of casual settings—their familiar, homely environments representing a milestone in each of their journeys, rather than a fixed stasis. The exhibition emerged from his own journeys in 2019. While visiting London for Notting Hill Carnival, Smith was informed of the death of a relative in Jamaica and returned to partake in the traditional Dead Yard commemorations—an extended wake-style celebration involving dance, games and large feasts. “While that was happening I was thinking a lot about fatherhood and manhood,” Smith says. “What does it mean to be a man from the Caribbean and to be a provider?”

Later that year he returned to the UK especially to see a solo show by abstract painter Mark Bradford at Hauser & Wirth in London. Smith’s work shares a textural idiom with Bradford’s vast, Rauschenberg-inspired canvases in that both layer their surfaces. But where Bradford builds outwards using paper, Smith uses a picotage technique to pick and partially remove tiny sections of the prints to create a dotted, almost disappearing effect. “The scales mean that there’s a lenticular quality to how the image works, because when you walk in front of it, it kind of shifts,” Smith explains. Exposing the board beneath the print in a single direction allows the images to almost protrude towards the viewer, while simultaneously appearing flattened from other angles.



Paul Anthony Smith, Untitled [details] (left; centre-left; centre-right); Dog an Duppy Drink Rum [detail] (right), 2020-1. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

We discuss the acclaim afforded to the works of Titus Kaphar over the past year, which take this idea of creative subtraction to its extreme by completely cutting subjects from the canvas. Is Smith’s technique akin to this—or does he view surface manipulation as a kind of addition? “In this show, I’m revealing a bit more to the audience than I usually do,” Smith says of his sparser picotage in Tradewinds. Whereas his previous exhibitions have focused specifically on the Windrush era and modernism, the latest Jack Shainman show is more domestic and intimate. “I’m giving you a bit more insight into who I am rather than picking away at my subjects as much. I’m using various patterns of disguise.”



Paul Anthony Smith, Untitled (Dead Yard), 2020. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

This impetus has allowed Smith to synthesise this cultural moment—one in which Black death is ubiquitous—into these new works. The result is a mixture of memory, commemoration and quiet contemplation, away from the carnival and music-oriented impulses of previous exhibitions like Junction (2019). In Untitled (Dead Yard), a man walks down a nighttime street, arms outstretched and wearing an unknowing smile. Smith's picotage resembles a superimposed metal gate around him, which seems to lift the subject from his quotidian surroundings. "I was trying to be a bit more vulnerable with my subjects and show more human nature," Smith explains. "These calm candid shots rather than the more performative aspects of Junction, which was about music."



Both: Untitled, 2020-1. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

Although not addressing the pandemic and 2020's racial justice movements in a photojournalistic sense, Smith views his Black and diaspora subjects as part of wider historical moments, despite focusing on this vulnerability—and the ritual and communities which enable it. Two untitled shots show the simple closeness of a friendly gathering: shared drinks, brightly painted nails and open shirts for the thick Caribbean air. "We come on earth for such a short time, and we are celebrated a few times in our lives," Smith reflects. "I think death is much closer to us than we think—but there's something amazing about it."

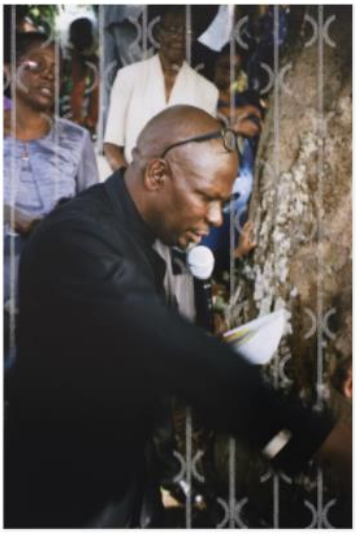


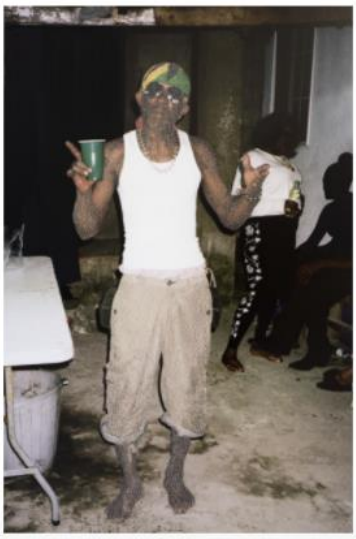












the PARIS REVIEW

The Fabric of Memory

By The Paris Review March 5, 2021

In Paul Anthony Smith's Untitled (Dead Yard)*, a figure stands with arms outstretched in the midst of a haze of ghostly breeze-blocks. The physical appears to commune with the spiritual; unreality encroaches on the real. It's a startling effect, one that persists throughout Smith's second solo show with Jack Shainman Gallery, "Tradewinds" (on view through April 3). Using a needled wooden tool, Smith painstakingly works over his photographic prints, puncturing the surface and chipping away at the ink. Each stipple, each architectural flourish laces the images with the fabric of memory. This is not reality; this is the world in recollection, the white noise of time and distance always threatening to drown out the past. A selection of images from "Tradewinds" appears below.*



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *BREEZE OFF YU SOUL*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 40 X 54". © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



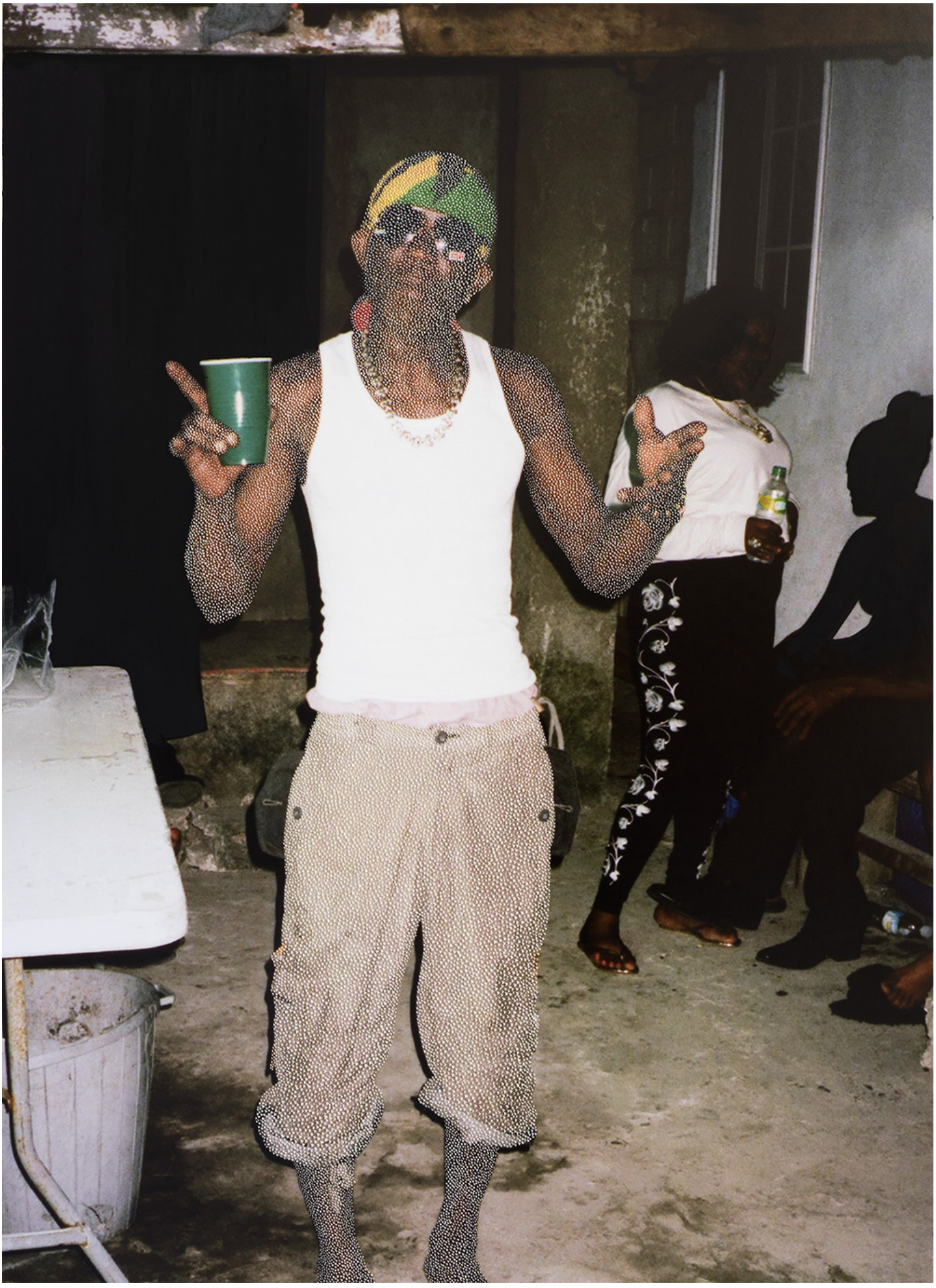
PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *DOG AN DUPPY DRINK RUM*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE, SPRAY PAINT, AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 72 X 104″. © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *ISLANDS #3*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 60 X 40″.
© PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



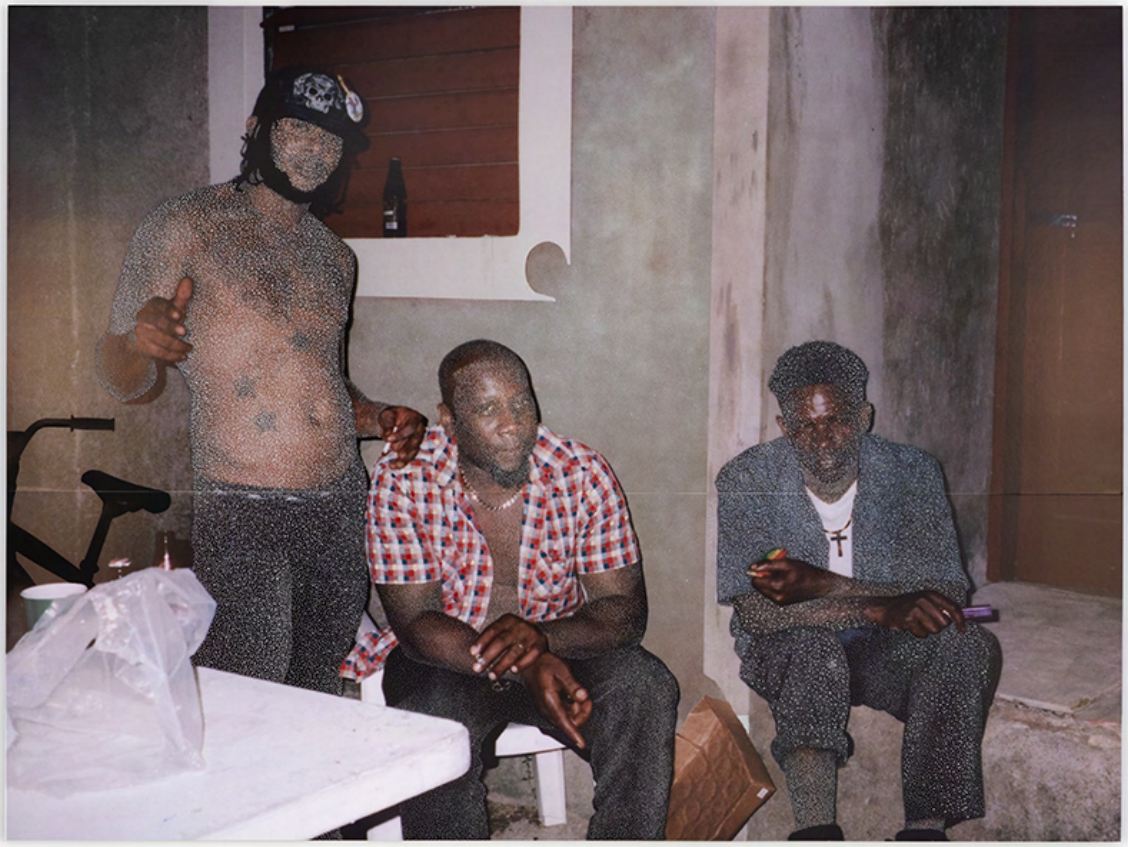
PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 68 X 96″.
© PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *YAAD STAR*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT AND GOUACHE ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 60 X 40″. © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



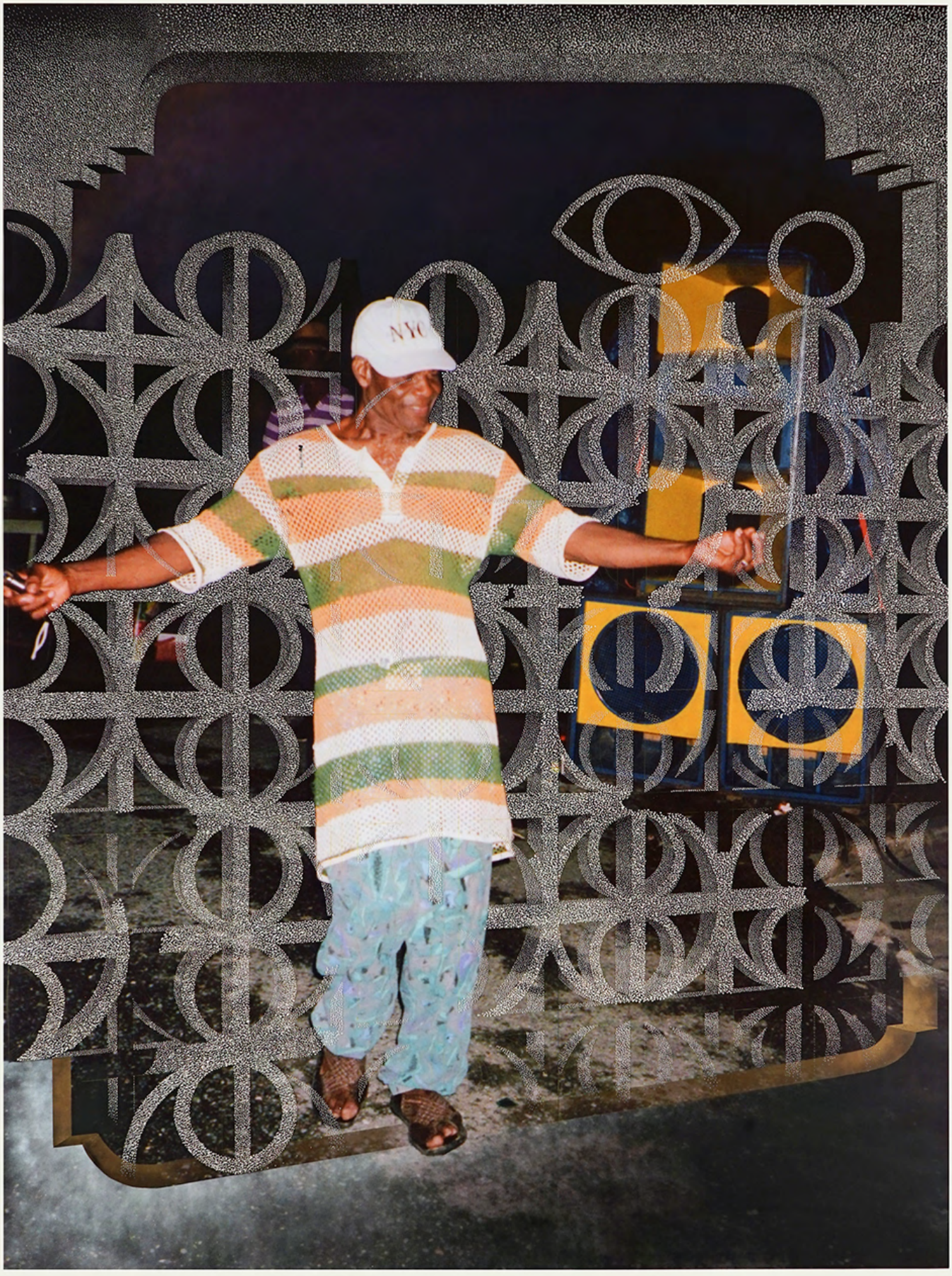
PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 40 X 60″.
© PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE, SPRAY PAINT, AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 72 X 96″. © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *WHO JAH BLESS…*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 60 X 40". © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED (DEAD YARD)*, 2020, UNIQUE PICOTAGE ON INKJET PRINT WITH SPRAY PAINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 95 7/8 X 71 7/8″. © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 60 X 40″.
© PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.

whitewall

March 22, 2021
By Pearl Fontaine

Paul Anthony Smith Muses on Life, Death, and Existence in “Tradewinds”



Portrait of Paul Anthony Smith by Atisha Paulson.

Paul Anthony Smith’s exhibition, “Tradewinds,” is on view through April 3 at **Jack Shainman Gallery**. The new work explores his Caribbean lineage and the roles of legacy, cartography, and geography in determining the footprint we leave on the world. Featuring the artist’s signature, photographic picotages, “Tradewinds” marks a shift in Smith’s practice, as he moves away from prominent imagery once typically incorporated in his work.

Peaked by his personal history and the weight of the global events of the last year—specifically the pandemic and deaths of **George Floyd** and **Breonna Taylor**—Smith poses questions in the images on view surrounding life and death, like “Why are people suddenly treated as more significant after they’ve left this earth?” The artist uses imagery familiar to his life and heritage as a channel through which he searches for ways to actively see humanity as it happens around us, diving into the Caribbean culture.

Whitewall heard from the artist about the making of “Tradewinds.”

WHITEWALL: What was the starting point for “Tradewinds”? How did you come to the title?

PAUL ANTHONY SMITH: After traveling to London and attending the Nothing Hill Carnival in 2019, I began thinking of the complexities of Caribbean migrations and about the Caribbean passengers who sailed to London on the HMT Empire Windrush during the 1950s. This history prompted me to travel to a few Caribbean nations in 2020, shortly before the covid-19 lockdown.



Paul Anthony Smith, "Untitled," 2020 -21, unique picotage, spray paint and acrylic paint on inkjet print, mounted on museum board and sintra, 72 x 96 inches; © Paul Anthony Smith, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

WW: Tell us about exploring themes of life, death, and the reality of our existence in works like *Untitled (Dead Yard)*. Why were you drawn to these topics?

PAS: During the time that I made *Dead Yard*, I was also making paintings in the studio and was specifically working on a portrait of a Black police officer vaguely standing on a corner. This was reflecting on police officers in my neighborhood of Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn standing on corners as a nightly visual presence, but also thinking of how much their presence symbolizes death throughout the American landscape and how death is a part of life.

I'm always interested in celebrations of life and how Black death by police brutality has traumatized Black America. Death is also an omnipresence celebrated in Caribbean traditions.

It's my awareness of these two topics juxtaposed, which I wanted to highlight in *Dead Yard.*



Installation view of Paul Anthony Smith's "Tradewinds," © Paul Anthony Smith, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

WW: You've used these works to pose questions on why the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor suddenly made their lives viewed as more significant. With this in consideration, what steps are you taking to acknowledge and celebrate the humanity around you?

PAS: I think I've been a lot closer to friends and family in the last year than before. I had many introspective moments over the past year where I've picked up the phone and made an effort to reach out to those close to me, either with a text or a call. I found myself being more vulnerable as 2020 progressed and it dawned on me that people including George Floyd and Breonna Taylor did not imagine their lives ending in such tragedy, or that their names would take on such a worldly presence. We now uplift and celebrate their names to make change.

WW: In your experience, what aspects of Caribbean culture personifies this idea of actively seeing humanity? How did you incorporate these solutions or actions into the works on view?

PAS: I think with “Tradewinds,”

I gave more than I usually do. I depicted friends and family living a normal life and how they functioned in a dominantly Black nation. I think if more Black people were living their normal lives in American society, we would see more humanity than what is often portrayed of us. Think of how differently society would be if the incarceration rate of Black and brown people reflected the 13% of the population that they represent in the United States.

WW: A few motifs often included in your picotages (like breeze blocks and brick walls) aren’t seen in these works on view. Can you tell us how you ended up moving away from this type of imagery and opting for settings that appear to occur more naturally?

PAS: The work naturally progressed from the breeze blocks to more intimate portraits. While I’ve continued to make some picotage works in these patterns, I made an effort with this new series to highlight the Caribbean islands and various distinctive architectural elements used in those trade wind locations. As a maker, I chose what elements I wanted to highlight, so how I approached picotage evolved. I also find it hard to see the work while it’s being produced in the studio.



Paul Anthony Smith, "Untitled," 2020 -21, unique picotage with spray paint on inkjet print, mounted on museum board and sintra 60 x 40 inches; © Paul Anthony Smith, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

WW: Something else you’ve considered in “Tradewinds” is the roles cartography, geography, and family have on our fate. How would you say these predetermined elements have affected your life trajectory and artistic practice?

PAS: I don’t think I would have existed if it weren’t for fate, the way in which life has progressed. There are many stories I’ve heard from my parents of what life was like before my existence. These stories have played into what I create and how it’s seen. In a way, it’s an escape to retrace my ancestral steps. I often ask myself, what is the purpose of life?

WW: You use tools from your ceramics training to alter your pigment prints, distorting the texture and perception of depth. Can you describe the process of creating one of your picotages and how you began incorporating these techniques?

PAS: I first began this process about nine years ago. While working on a few small ceramic sculptures, I intentionally began scratching away at a drawing on a pigment print with a needle. The scratches began jagged and later organized pics. The current works are far from where I began with a flimsy needle tool, appearing much stronger and thicker in diameter through my use of a chisel-like tool.



Paul Anthony Smith, "Breeze off yu soul," 2020-21, unique picotage with spray paint on inkjet print, mounted on museum board and sintra, 40 x 54 inches; © Paul Anthony Smith, courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

ARTnews

March 15, 2021
By Angelica Villa

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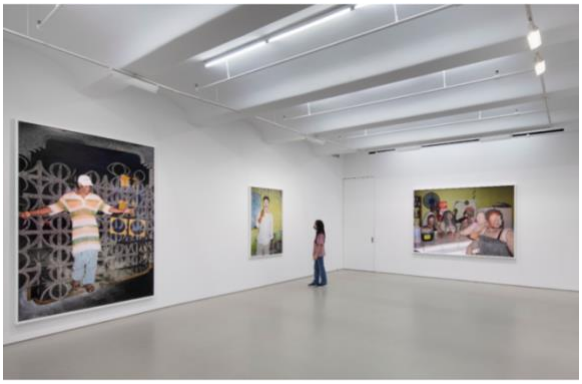
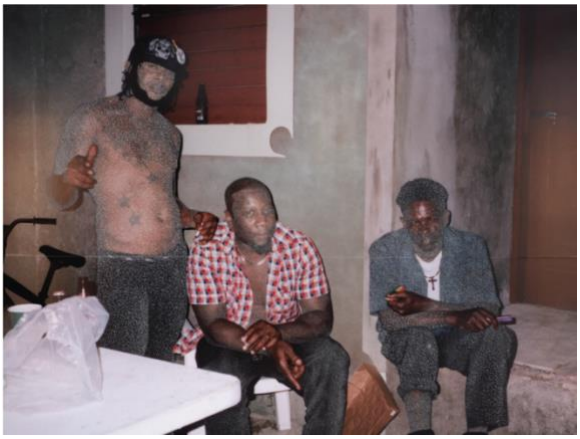


Paul Anthony Smith, “Tradewinds” installation at Jack Shainman, New York, February 2021. JACK SHAINMAN.

Born in Jamaica, Smith moved to Miami as an adolescent, and later pursued a BFA at the Kansas City Art Institute, where he studied ceramics. His chosen medium these days, however, is something much different: photography. Having shown his work at the Dan Cameron–organized Open Spaces biennial in Kansas City in 2018, he was added to Jack Shainman’s roster soon after, and had his first show there in 2019. He has been on the rise ever since, and he said he considers his latest work “an extension of my life.”

Smith, who is now based in Brooklyn, documented trips to Jamaica, Trinidad, and London over the past year. The artist selected the images he used from hundreds of pictures, and each bears out specific references to local culture. *Untitled (Dead Yard)*, from 2020, for example, refers a the Caribbean funerary tradition known as the ninth night, which involves a days-long wake that usually begins once the sun goes down, with guests arriving around 10 p.m. (Its name refers to the point when the dead depart the living forever.) On these occasions, Smith said, graveyards are lively despite the morbid circumstances.

In the image taken in a Jamaican port city, a funeral-goer stands against a picotaged fence with a sound system behind him, his arms stretched open, in a gesture that recalls a warm welcome or a crucifix, according to Smith. His goal had been to portray the range of emotions that accompany death on the ninth night. “One’s life doesn’t end there—it goes on,” he said. “The only thing is, you’re not present for that party.”



Paul Anthony Smith, *Untitled*, 2020-21. JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY.

Before the pandemic hit in March 2020, Smith also planned to visit various other Caribbean islands to survey their scenes. But, with travel restrictions in place, he was instead forced to work with the images he already had. He made the final images using 35mm film, scanning the contact prints and collaging the digital version, to manipulate the original “in a way I think they should be composed,” he said, so as to “break [the figures] down and disguise them.”

Throughout the new project, Smith was preoccupied by thoughts of departing by boat and traveling between Caribbean locales. In his mind, aspects of his family history, like his parents' time working on cruise ships, mingled with musings on postcolonial Caribbean life. (The exhibition's title, "Tradewinds," alludes to the routes used by trade ships that enabled colonial expansion into the Americas.) He also considers the economic factors affecting networks of people living between the two regions, which often result in communities reliant on income from family members in the U.S. An immigrant and a U.S. citizen, Smith said, "I am still thinking about how I fit in both places. All these male figures are sort of an exterior [version] of me."

Postcolonial thinkers like Stuart Hall and Frantz Fanon have become key in Smith's process. "You never really feel fully one thing or the other," Smith said. "Baldwin felt most American when he was in France; with Fanon, he realized how much of a Martinican he was when he was overseas. There are these little nuances of recognizing that someone is not from a place. How you talk, how fast you move, how you stand up. If you look too put together. There are just various nuances that I experience back home that I find strange, because as much as I think that I am from there and these are my people, there is always something that gets called out."

Ghosts were also on Smith's mind during the making of the series. According to the funerary tradition of the ninth night, the spirit of the dead is said to pass during the ceremony. Another image, titled *Dog and Duppy Drink Rum* (2020–21), depicts 10 men standing together for what feels like a group portrait. (In Caribbean folklore, a duppy is a malevolent spirit.) At the far left, there is a nearly undetectable silhouetted figure standing in the background, a dog crossing between his legs. That ghostly figure, Smith said, is a reference to "loss and the absence of various people"—and the artist sees an uncomfortable parallel for this in the fact that those pictured will not see the images from the New York show. "Here I am, making these works for the white cube space with these Black people, but I'm not showing them the work," he said.



Paul Anthony Smith, *Untitled*, 2020-2021. JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY.

The bulk of Smith's latest works feature male subjects, and Smith said he felt compelled to focus on them because of the dominance of U.S. media coverage of violence against Black men. Looked at in this context, even Smith's images featuring "day-to-day" imagery, as he put it, take on a darker context. An untitled portrait of a friend, depicted in an armchair facing the camera, shows the sitter pre-pandemic. Since then, that unnamed man contracted Covid-19, fell into a coma, and has since recovered.

Smith describes subjects such as that friend as "stand-ins," even though he often knows them well. "I use them as placeholders." The works' subjects function as "props for others to understand," he explained, adding, "When you are using a camera, it's somewhat autobiographical. I am behind it, and this is like my biography being distilled."

And as he took the pictures and later picked over the works with a ceramic tool on their prints, he found himself reconsidering death itself. He thought of the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor,

and how their images were circulated so widely. “That is what we’re living with this year. There are a lot of images that get carried around of dead people,” Smith said, in a statement that could also apply to his own work. “They become icons in a way.”

ARTNEWS

Jack Shainman Gallery to Mount First Paul Anthony Smith Show in April

BY ***Annie Armstrong (http://www.artnews.com/author/aarmstrong/)*** POSTED **03/08/19 2:47 PM**

Next up at Jack Shainman in New York is a doubleheader.



Paul Anthony Smith, *Junction*, 2018.
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN

Beginning April 4, both of the dealer's Chelsea spaces will host "Junction," a solo show by Jamaican-born, Brooklyn-based artist Paul Anthony Smith. It will be his first outing with the gallery, which he joined in October.

The exhibition, which runs through May 11, will offer a look at the post-colonial Caribbean by way of Smith's signature work in what he terms "picotage," which involves him putting down tiny dots atop photographs, often of people, thereby constructing forms that are reminiscent of modernist architecture and design.

" 'Junction' is the culmination of work exploring both my own personal history, as well as our culture's shifting notions of belonging," Smith said by email. "Using the 'picotage' process in my prints allows me to distort the surface of photographs, resulting in images that challenge the belief that a photograph must tell objective truths about one's past."

Last year, Smith appeared in the Open Spaces biennial that was organized by Dan Cameron in Kansas City, and he's had solo shows at Atlanta Contemporary, the Green Gallery in Milwaukee, and Real Art Ways in Hartford, Connecticut. He is included in the touring "Men of Change: Power. Triumph. Truth." exhibition, organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, which is currently on view at the California African American Museum.

"Paul's practice defies any easy categorization, representing an uncompromising portrait of the Caribbean diaspora," Shainman told *ARTnews*. "In this moment, where borders have become both loaded and reduced in our shared political dialogue, Paul's work infuses them with much needed complexity and grace."

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Galerie

December 3, 2018
By Lucy Rees

16 Artists to Look Out For at Art Basel, Untitled, and NADA in Miami

See the buzzworthy talents to keep an eye on at this year's fairs

Galerie scoured the fairs during Miami's Art Week to share which artists are having a major moment or on the cusp of achieving great things in 2019. Here, in no particular order, are 16 to look out for this week.

ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH

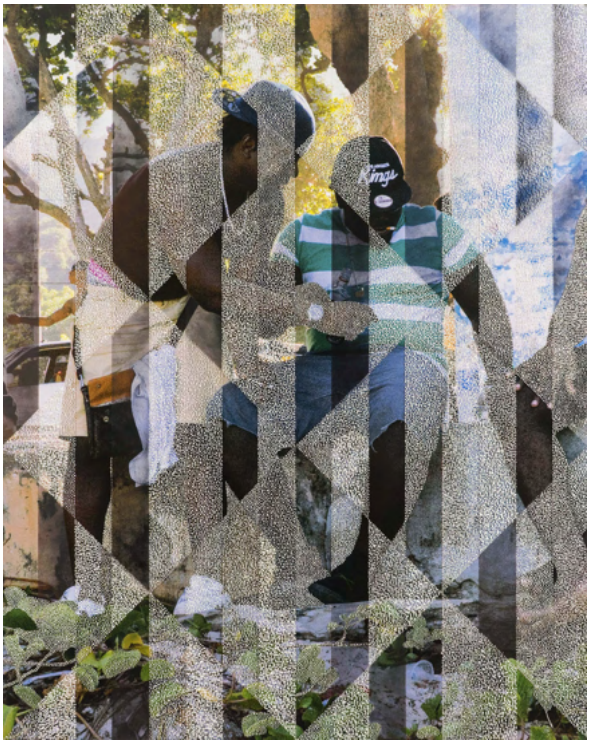


Paul Anthony Smith, *To Be Titled #1*, 2018.Photo: Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman

Paul Anthony Smith
Jack Shainman, New York

Jamaica-born, New York-based Paul Anthony Smith creates stunning oil-on-canvas paintings and picotage images, which he produces by picking away at the surface of photographic prints. The technique of obscuring and altering the subject's skin alludes to tribal masks and African rituals such as scarification. His work has recently been acquired by numerous public collections, including the Blanton Museum at the University of Texas, Austin, and been the subject of buzzworthy exhibitions including Atlanta Contemporary and the Philadelphia Photo Arts Center; he's also been included in group shows at the New Museum, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. After just signing with Shainman, his very first exhibition with the gallery is slated for spring 2019.

ARTFORUM



Paul Anthony Smith, *Kings*, 2018, uni ue icotage on ink et rint with s ra aint mounted on museum oard, .

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Paul Anthony Smith

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September 8 - October 13, 2018

rom a distance, Paul Anthony Smith's "picotage" pieces, 2012–, resemble movie stills interrupted by television static. p close, they look like pictures dotted with tiny dabs of white paint. Smith creates these small, textured imperfections by carefully picking apart his mounted photographs with a ceramic needle, exposing their white undersides. These sculptural marks form layers of neatly patterned geometric shapes that mask some parts of his photographs, manipulating the pictures' depths and conveying a sense of movement. Like old-fashioned lenticular billboards that display a different image depending on the viewing angle, Smith's works require you to shift your position to read the whole picture.

Within the gaps of these crafted designs are glimpses of public spaces in Jamaica, Brooklyn, and Puerto Rico where black people are socializing, grieving, and being. In *Kings* , 2018, for example, a diamond picotage pattern weaves through a scene of two men drinking and smoking together outside. One of them, standing, begins to reach over the man sitting next to him. They're both looking down toward something we cannot quite make out, but their gazes reach the space adjacent to the bent knee of someone else sitting beside them, whose body is otherwise cut out of the frame. The carved overlay serves as a fence, blocking you from encroaching upon a private moment or, perhaps, redacting the memory. These edits challenge the tendency to assume that a photograph necessarily represents reality while pointing out that there can be unknown complexities and intricacies in the story behind a picture.

Smith's silk screen series "Gray Area," 2014–, contains a similar style of manipulation, as he collages and reprints pictures, transforming them into entirely new images. Both series evoke the nostalgia of found, stained photographs, but Smith's picotage pieces are less sentimental than constructive—they rearrange, invert, and obstruct memory and identity, revealing the malleability and frailness of both.

— *Erica Rawles*

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ARTNEWS

Castles for the Afterlife: The Coffins of Paa Joe Make Their Way from Ghana to New York

BY *Robin Scher* - POSTED **08/22/17**



Installation view of the "The Coffins of Paa Joe and the Pursuit of Happiness" at the School | Jack Shainman Gallery, Kinderhook, New York. - COURTESY JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK

Excerpt:

[...] And there is fine arrangement in another room of various antique African and Asian wooden masks used for ritual and decoration, a photograph of Nan Goldin shrouded in shadow, titled *Self Portrait at Age 18* (1970), and Paul Anthony Smith's *Giant Steps* (2016), which presents an enlarged photograph of a woman in the midst of a carnival parade, distorted by an etching technique typical of the young New York-based artist.

The expansive display [...] evinces a deep love for collecting art, and it embodies, in Shainman's words, "man's quest for wanting to better ourselves for achievements, for spirituality, for questions, answers, and a kind of greatness."

LA WEEKLY

At a Pair of Culver City Galleries, Three Artists Flip the Script on Technique

SHANA NYS DAMBROT | OCTOBER 3, 2018 | 10:43AM

Though Luis De Jesus and Tarrah Von Lintel technically share an address in the Culver City gallery district, their operations are independent of each other. However, this month these neighboring exhibitions are very much in conversation. Unintended as this confluence is, in each of the three artists having solo shows at 2685 S. La Cienega we see a version of the same dynamic – a totally unexpected, materially subversive and exceptionally analog, labor-intensive take on what would otherwise be traditional mediums of photography and drawing.

At Luis De Jesus, Paul Anthony Smith demonstrates the "picotage" method, by which photo-based mixed-media works are textured, augmented and disrupted by a blizzard of impossibly tiny pinpricks, which ruffle but do not pierce the surface of the paper. The effect is akin to digital pixelation, but because it is also dimensional, as you move around, the image, though still, seems to shift and change, in a kind of analog lenticular, made with paper and a tiny ceramic implement.



Paul Anthony Smith, *Customs and Clearance* 2018

Courtesy Luis de Jesus

Smith uses this arcane technique not only for the patterns' considerable optical effects but also because the obscuring and splicing of imagery it produces serves his deeply personal, cultural narrative of immigration, invention and embracing a multicultural identity. The images he uses includes both found his own photographs of family and friends in the Afro-Caribbean diasporic communities of Jamaica, Brooklyn and Puerto Rico. By first capturing and composing, then deconstructing and abstracting these portraits, Smith is enacting a physical metaphor for their experiences.

HYPERALLERGIC

How to Embed a Shout: A New Generation of Black Artists Contends with Abstraction

A new wave of black abstract artists are exploring ways to push the language of abstraction and still retaining their cultural specificity. And they're not doing it alone.

Seph Rodney – August 23, 2017

Excerpt:



Paul Anthony Smith, "Afternoon Brew" (2016) 95 x 48 inches
(photo courtesy ZieherSmith Gallery, New York)

[...] Several black artists have risen to prominence by resolutely working with the black figure, shifting it from the margins of culture. Kerry James Marshall, Fred Wilson, Kara Walker, Kehinde Wiley, Mickalene Thomas, Chris Ofili, and Jordan Casteel have all championed the black body, reinserting it into the art histories from which it had been excised. [Tomashi] Jackson tells me that this work "let's us be physically alive in a world that is constantly trying to disappear us." For this gift, she says she is glad to be among a "generational cohort that I love and respect." At the same time she acknowledges, "What I see in the market is a desire for black figuration, blunt and blatant figuration." This mode of presentation does make the black body visible and esteemed. However, [Tariku] Shiferaw, Jackson, and [Adam] Pendleton have taken a divergent, strategic approach in which, as Jackson tells me, the body is implicit, but these artists carefully calibrate how and under what conditions it is seen. It is not for ready consumption. This body will not provide sustenance for appetites desiring the exotic, the sumptuous ethnic flesh that in the larger culture is as much longed for as it is held in contempt.

Other artists have work that aligns with this wave, including Paul Anthony Smith, a 29-year-old artist born in Jamaica but raised in Miami, whose photo-based works, shown at ZieherSmith gallery utilized images of black people in a parade underneath a scrim of pointillist geometric patterns, and they derive their titles from classic jazz albums [...]

Creators VICE



Images courtesy of ZieherSmith, NY

THIS ARTIST RECREATES MEMORIES WITH PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLAGE

LAURA HUTSON HUNTER - Jun 27 2017, 2:26pm

Paul Anthony Smith turns photographs into pointillist representations of social constructs.

By working with many metaphorical layers, artist Paul Anthony Smith turns simple photos into chill-wave diamond patterns on fever-dream seascapes, faces that look like African cowrie shell masks, and chain-link fences, cinderblocks, and door-bead curtains made from multicolored plastic gemstones. His method is an idiosyncratic process he calls *picotage*, and it's something he developed in his childhood in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica.

"I grew up looking at family photos" Smith tells *Creators* from his studio in Williamsburg, "and later on used my ceramic tools on photos that constructed something new." He takes the same hand tool ceramicists use to cut shapes into clay and tears tiny, rhythmic spots into the surface of a photograph, lifting it just enough to obstruct the image without actually removing it. The result is a pointillist photograph that functions like collage, but instead of adding images, Smith's method subtracts from them.

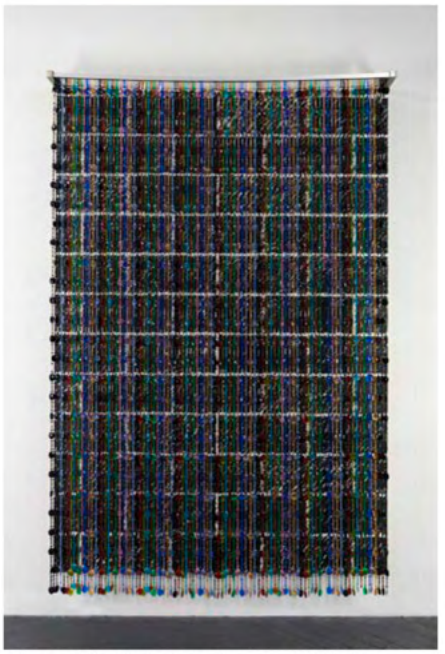


Nostrand, 2016 unique picotage on Inkjet print 48 x 71 in (121.9 x 180.3 cm)

"The items in photographs acts as an engine, directing the work to its final stage," says Smith, who compares his art making process to a dance. "Often times I aim to disguise certain subjects—unlike what modern photography was constructed to do, revealing and capturing moments in time."

In the past, Smith's work has covered faces with mask-like patterns, references to African scarification and ritual magic. For a new series of works currently on view at Atlanta Contemporary, Smith has pared his conceptual palette down from masks to walls, a change that shows Smith's capacity for artistic evolution while staying true to his conceptual foundations. He moves from masks, which obstruct personal identities, to walls, which obstruct social landscapes.

"For years I've been interested in cinder blocks and walls," Smith says, "and how they create social structures. I've also been interested in the ways images are read, when memory becomes broken and fragmented." The works not only show photographs of walls, but also cinderblock patterns carved into the surface of photos of Smith's Jamaican homeland and photos of crowds that seem unremarkable, if it weren't for the time-consuming remnants of Smith's *picotage* layer.



Blurred Lines, (Beads2) Multi-Colored, **2017 Oil sticks on Canvas with Beads 96 x 66 x 8 in (243.8 x 167.6 x 20.3 cm)**

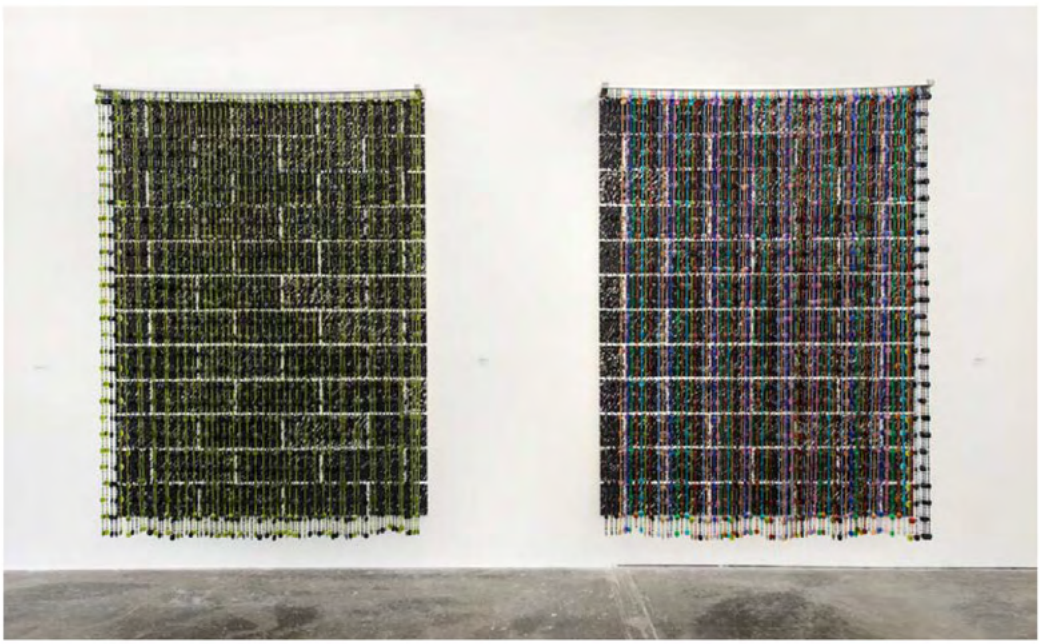
Nostrand, an inkjet pigment print from 2016, captures a graffiti-covered plywood construction wall, a storefront gate, and an orange-and-white striped traffic barrier covered with Smith's cinderblock *picotage* pattern. The repetitive nature of his technique evokes the obsessive quality often seen in outsider art, and turns what would otherwise be an unremarkable image into a cohesive vision of how memory works, and how personal histories color reality.

"We all have time when we create walls to restrict others but don't necessarily need borders," Smith says. "Often times it's a fear. We're afraid of the unknown."

The Paul Anthony Smith exhibition *Walls Without Borders* is on view through July 30 at Atlanta Contemporary. To learn more about the artist, click here.

Review: Atlanta Contemporary's trio of thoughtful exhibitions by Smith, Braunig and Gary

Catherine Fox - May 9, 2017



Excerpt:

[...] Smith emigrated from Jamaica to the U.S. at age nine, and the show's title, *Walls without Borders*, alludes to the immigrant's conflicted relationship with homeland and new country — that sense of belonging to both cultures, and neither. In a wall text, the New York-based artist also invokes W.E.B. Du Bois' "double consciousness," a term coined to describe the similarly fraught experience of being Black and American. Although thoughts about current events or experiences may prompt a particular piece, a will to acknowledge his overlapping African, Caribbean and American selves seems to be a subtext of the three major bodies of mixed-media works at the Contemporary.

In-betweenness is also embodied in the multiple meanings of recurring imagery. Walls obstruct and protect. Masks can hide and constrain, like the ingratiating social face African Americans wear in Paul Dunbar's 1913 poem, "We Wear the Mask." But they also allow a liberating anonymity and, as with the case of masks in African rituals, even transcendence.



Smith takes a different direction in the most recent series. In *Blurred Lines*, strings of beads curtain a canvas painted in rich scribbly black marks to masonry wall. Making for a lovely effect, the beads, which vary in hue from piece to piece, shimmer in light and move with air currents. He notes they are used to separate spaces in Jamaican homes and that the sound they make alerts occupants that someone is entering: walls without borders. Here, they beckon but part to reveal a dead end.

Smith's pithy merging of form and content, command of his materials and ability to find the universal in the personal make him an artist to watch [...]

artnet®

The Story Behind RAGGA NYC, The Caribbean Queer Collective Seizing the Spotlight at the New Museum

The group is fostering a creative community of dynamic and talented people.

Terence Trouillot, May 4, 2017

me: oh ok... so, ma, my friend chris has a group—let's say, called RAGGA

mami: RAGGA?

me: uh-huh. he's jamaican, he throws parties and interviews people from the caribbean that are from the lgbt community, he asks them: where they're from, how has their culture inspired their work, the connection between their work and their culture—and things like that... so he hired me for a party and interviewed me as well. that came out a couple of months ago. i was talking about how i felt as a dominican coming to the US after having lived in Santo Domingo for 6 or 7 years... and just about being dominican and how i felt about looking mixed, you understand?

This is artist Maya Monès talking to her mother. The conversation, originally in Spanish, is available to listen to as an audio recording (or read as a translated transcript) as part of a group exhibition at the New Museum, "RAGGA NYC: All the threatened and delicious things joining one another," part of the Bowery institution's just-opened fleet of spring shows (which also include Carol Rama and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye). Monès's quote gives a glimpse of the community-building behind RAGGA, a loosely connected network of artists, poets, and designers that serves as both a creative group and support network for queer artists from a Caribbean background.



Paul Anthony Smith, Port Antonio Market #4, 2013. Courtesy the artist and Zieher Smith

The "friend Chris," mentioned in Monès's dialogue, is multi-disciplinary artist Christopher Udemezue (Neon Christina), the artist and impresario who founded RAGGA NYC in 2015. (The name comes from the voltaic musical genre that originated in 1980s Jamaica.)

In a dynamic exhibition brochure, Udemezue gives his own picture of the ferment that brought the group together. RAGGA, he says, represents "a hybrid of ideas that began as late-night conversations over familial island roots, current social politics, empanadas vs. beef patties, pum pum shorts, scamming, and a longing for an authentic dancehall party that would also provide a safe space for queer Caribbeans and their kin."

The two-part sound installation that makes up Monès's piece, *Ciencias Sociales* (2017), mirrors this lively mix of concerns.

It includes intimate audio of Monès talking to her mom, revealing how her art practice functions as a way of thinking through her African heritage as a Dominican woman. Their dialogue plunges deep into a candid discussion about the rampant racism in Dominican culture against their Haitian

neighbors, and their own African roots—what the artist calls a "cloudy sense of pride in a sort of racial limbo."

But, at the same time, *Ciencias Sociales* foregrounds the artist's ambient music, a song she recorded with conga drums called *Mami,* filling the gallery with melodic Afro-Caribbean beats.

Curated by Sara O'Keeffe for the New Museum's residency program, the exhibition gives a sampling of the creativity marshaled by the RAGGA network. Multivalent in style, the show reflects the group's emphasis on celebrating diversity, and its determination to wrestle with the racial complexities of Caribbean consciousness.

Highlights include the sculptures of Renée Stout and Tau Lewis. Both look at creole traditions in the US. Stout's work recalls the advertising signs of root medicine shops in New Orleans and DC, while Lewis offers an affecting marble portrait bust, presented on a plinth of cinder blocks, and with chains for hair. (The material is meant as a nod to so-called "creole marble," mined in Pickens, Georgia, and incorporated into monuments across the country.)

Paul Anthony Smith's prints use a process called 'picotage,' a kind of pointillism where the points are torn or scratched off the surface of the work to create a textured pattern of white hatch marks. The artists also selects from his "Grey Area" series, silkscreen prints, reminiscent of Lorna Simpson, of scattered images of men he encountered in Jamaica at the time of this uncle's funeral, with images of burial grounds.



Paul Anthony Smith, Grey Area #5, 2014. Courtesy the artist and Zieher Smith.

Udemezue's own contribution are colorful set-up photos, imaginatively re-staging the Vodou ceremony at Bois Caiman, which marked the Haitian revolution, and depicting Queen Nanny, an Obeah woman who fled from slavery in Jamaica and became the leader of the group of escaped slaves known as the Maroons.

Chaos-monde (2017), a collaboration between RAGGA artists Carolyn Lazard and Bleue Liverpool, incorporates an astrological map. A set of totems places on the map's surface include leaves, sand, shells, and dried sugarcane, items that suggest Caribbean religious practice, which has been so important in claiming an identity in the face of both Christian missionaries and colonialism. The specific positions of these markers on the star map point to two days important in the assertion of Caribbean identity: January 1, 1804, the day independence was declared in Haiti, and October 27, 1979, the day St. Vincent gained independence.

The trick of the installation is that all this symbolically resonant stuff is barely visible, viewed only through a trap door in the floor that only lets you see fragments—a fitting metaphor for identities only now coming into view in shows like this one.

"RAGGA: All the threatened and delicious things joining one another" is on view at the New Museum, New York, from May 3 to June 25, 2017.

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

All the Threatened and Delicious Things Joining One Another

by Magdalyn Asimakis

RAGGA NYC

THE NEW MUSEUM | MAY 3 – JUNE 25, 2017

In Édouard Glissant's book *Poetics of Relation,* first published in 1990, he considers the idea of opacity as something that can nurture relations between "all the threatened and delicious things." In contrast to articulated transparency, opacity creates space for complex, diverse and non-fixed existence.¹ It is in this spirit that the exhibition on the fifth floor of the New Museum takes its title. *All the threatened and delicious things joining one another* puts Glissant's concept of opacity into practice through the works of artists from the RAGGA collective. Each engaging in distinctive practices, the artists included in this exhibition are presented in a manner that protects both collectivity and difference.

The first encounter in the exhibition is with the work of Tau Lewis. A sculptural bust portrait called *Georgia marble marks slave burial sites across America* in plaster and cement with heavy chained hair is positioned with her back to two cacti from Lewis's "poorly potted plants" series. Made from the dust generated during the production of *Georgia*, the cacti grow out of cinder blocks, their spines made of delicate milk thistle and dandelion. The weight of the cement counters this foliage both in vulnerability and mobility—prominent themes of tension in Lewis's contemplation of the diasporic condition. The cacti in particular gesture to this as plants that have been removed from their native environments and continue to flourish, while the cinder blocks both allude to temporary residence and negating the need for museum structures of display.

Through a hand-dyed, tassled room divider, *The Rootworker's Table* by Renée Stout is teeming with spiritual potency. A mix of hand-blown and found glass bottles house natural elixirs used in root medicine shops, at once reference and reconfigure West African, Caribbean, and American mystical practices and Western modernism. In a poetic curatorial play on the spiritual remedies that Stout explores, Carolyn Lazard and Bleue

Liverpool's *Chaos-Monde* cuts into the floor of the museum and creates an astrological map beneath an opaque piece of Plexiglas. Made of natural materials such as leaves, sand, and dried sugarcane, these forms recreate the arrangement of the stars on January 1, 1804—the date of the Haitian Revolution—and October 27, 1979—the day St. Vincent and Grenadines gained independence. The simultaneous physical penetration of this work into the museum structure and its resistance to transparent visibility makes it one of the most poignant articulations of Glissant's theories.

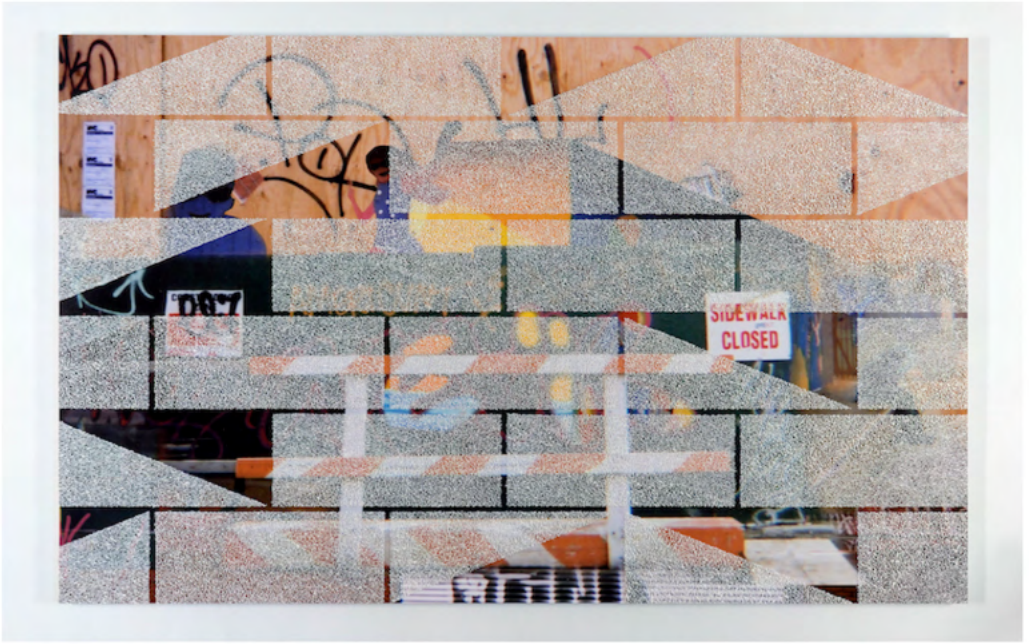
Glissant's writing conceptually threads its way through the exhibition not only through the idea of opacity and the "relational poetics" of Caribbean culture as an organism of local historical and contemporary elements, but also in the common interests between himself and the artists presented. Christopher Udemezue's photographs, for example, depict staged scenes of Queen Nanny the Jamaican leader of the Maroons. A group of escaped slaves who created their own refugee communities and raided plantations, the Maroons' consistent resistance against colonial structure and action is reflected in these spiritually opulent color photographs. Glissant was very interested in the changing representation of the Maroons over time, and thought of them as *Negators*-those who refuse the values of colonialism.² Paul Anthony Smith's "Grey Area" series of silkscreens collage photographs of his acquaintances in Jamaica collapse time and memory into constellations of interrelated lives and impressions, further obscured through the monochromatic printmaking technique. In both the "Grey Area" and picotage works—a laborious technique in which the artist stipples the paper surface—Smith explores the protective aspects of opacity in the visible sense.

Ambiently throughout the exhibition, Maya Monès's captivating sound piece *Ciencias Sociales* fills the space with recordings of conversations she had with her mother mixed with her playing conga drums. The two women have a series of discussions that pivot around their African heritage and Dominican location. The dynamics of this transcultural dialogue fill the space audibly and conceptually, the emphasis on language crystalized in the appended reading room. In many ways this piece connects the dialogues of the exhibiting artists, and its presence throughout the space echoes the collectivity of RAGGA and the potential of Glissant's opacity.

ARTNEWS

FACE VALUE: PAUL ANTHONY SMITH ON HIS MANY MASKS

BY *Robin Scher* - POSTED **09/13/16 11:52 AM**



Paul Anthony Smith, *Untitled 2*, 2016, unique picotage on inkjet print.
COURTESY ZIEHERSMITH

Scores of costumed children ran around me, screaming, as I made my way through the Hasidic area of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, to meet the artist Paul Anthony Smith at his studio a few months ago. They were dressed as doctors, animals, and, bizarrely, SWAT team members. On that sunny afternoon, the harvest festival of Purim was afoot.

Incidentally, the work that Smith makes, which I was on my way to see, is also rooted in disguise. Twenty-eight, and born in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, he adorns people in found photographs, both personal and historical, with intricate, iridescent masks, using a ceramic needle tool. The laborious etching process, borrowed from an 18th-century French technique of making patterned holes on images, goes by the term picotage.

In the past Smith has likened the results of his picotage to "scarification," and indeed this ancient practice of permanently marking one's skin resembles Smith's work in both both process and form. Typically, the result sees Smith's subjects covered in speckled constellations which often completely shroud their appearance.



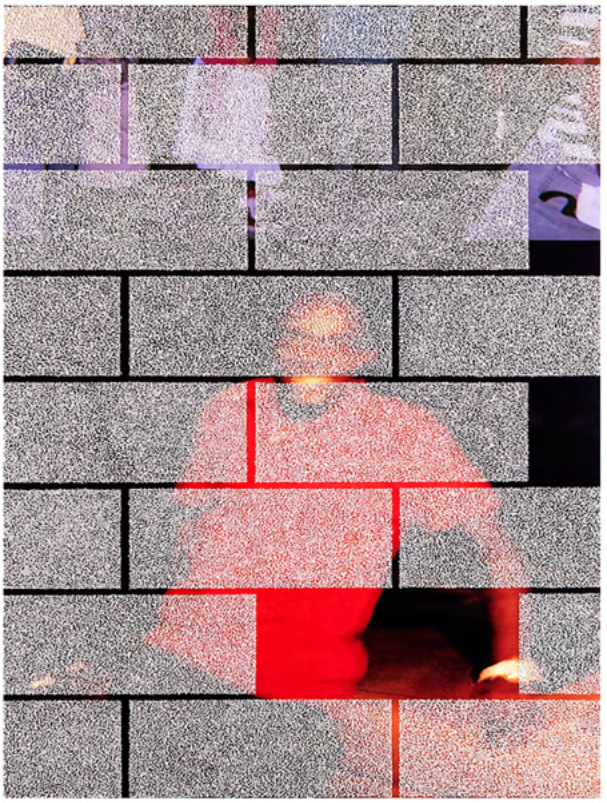
A fine example of this work, *Masked Woman No. 3 (2013)*, is on view in the Brooklyn Museum's show "Disguise: Masks and Global African Art" through Sunday, September 18, an appearance that comes after recent solo shows in Milan and New York.

Smith's interest in disguise began in 2010 when he performed with the artist Nick Cave at the Kansas City Arts Institute. Wearing one of Cave's inimitable masks, Smith had an insight into the potential that disguises hold for revealing people's hidden natures. "You get this spirit, nobody knows who you are, it comes with this sort of power," Smith said.

This was in 2012, and Smith had up until then spent his time focusing on ceramics at the Kansas City Arts Institute in Missouri. During this period he was also working as an archivist at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art,
Digitizingimages from the Hallmark photographic collection. Having grown tired of "all the dust" from ceramics, and surrounded by photographs, Smith came upon his tactile approach to image making.

The Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie II was the first to fall victim to Smith's needle. "I wanted to rough it up," said Smith, referring to an iconic photograph he used of the emperor taken during his historic visit to Jamaica in 1966. Smith's impulse led him to tear the photograph's surface in a consistent pattern, forming a sort of static. Many Rastafarians considered Selassie to be the messiah. Distorting the emperor's visage, Smith saw his action as an attempt "to cover up this idea [of history] that you're brought up with."

Smith explained this all to me in an excitable, yet relaxed manner as he paced his brightly-lit studio, wearing an Adidas sweater, track pants, and a cap, and then told me more about his upbringing.



Smith spent the first nine years of his life in Jamaica, and then moved to Miami with his family. He has returned to the country only a handful of times since. Although he said that he would easily come to assimilate into his new home, each visit to Jamaica reminded him of his semi-interloper status in both countries.

On a trip back in 2011, for instance, Smith noticed a group of workers on the airport tarmac. Something in the worker's relaxed appearance and the contrasting uniform of reflective vests paired with white collared shirts appealed to Smith. It felt both familiar and foreign. He photographed the workers, later turning them into painted prints during a residency in Colorado. "I grew up in the working class, so I have a lot of respect for them," said Smith, who depicted the workers with minimal facial details—his first venture into portraiture through obfuscation.

The inspiration for the masked portrait hanging in the Brooklyn Museum came from the Kuba tribe of the Democratic Republic of Congo. "It's about the history of the strength of woman, but also their downfalls," said Smith. "It was a way for me to show the struggles of life, but through that reveal another greatness."

Underneath the mask is a photograph of his mother. "She would send me a picture every year and a half or so," he said, explaining that he blew up one of these to make the work. "I haven't lived with my mom since I was nine. She lives in the U.K. and I try to visit her once in awhile, so those images kept me up with her and I wanted to turn them into something." And so he applied that extra layer to her face, making her unrecognizable to all but the artist himself, personalizing her but also obscuring her—a fact that brought to mind something he had told me earlier in the visit: "I've been thinking a lot about how memory acts as a surrogate for reality."

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alphasixty

In the Studio with Paul Anthony Smith

Jenny Bahn
Photos by Atisha Paulson
Mar. 22, 2017

Excerpt:



Paul Anthony Smith's exteriors often work to direct a viewer to his subject's hidden inner core, if only to speculate, dream, wonder. Whether it's the manipulated surface of a photograph or the blocky lines in an oil painting, Smith's attention to the outer-facing begs the question: *What lies beneath?* It's a more roundabout meditation on identity, more abstract than on-the-nose. As Smith once put it himself, "Masks disguise the figure allowing them to be free."

Jamaica born and Brooklyn based, Smith's work–from his paintings to his ceramics to his photographs–mines themes like history, politics, and class struggles. There is often an element of looking back, whether that be at his own heritage or of the country of his birth. Smith moved to Miami with his family when he was just nine years old. Later, Smith landed at Kansas City Art Institute in Missouri, where his focus on ceramics began to wane in favor of a curious and long-forgotten technique for which he would become best known: picotage.

Using a ceramic needle, Smith picks and plucks at the surface of his photographs. The picotage method, which Smith uses to effectively maim an image until it practically shimmers, is borrowed from 18th century France. The result is gorgeous images full of disguise, often lending his everyday subjects a pomp and grandeur they are too often not afforded in real life. It's a theme that continues throughout Smith's work, no matter the medium he chooses to use. He urges you to look deeper […]

ARTILLERY

PAUL ANTHONY SMITH

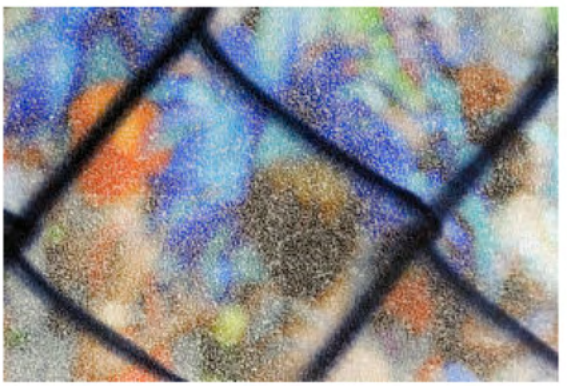
ZieherSmith Gallery

by Arthur Ivan Bravo - March 7, 2017



Paul Anthony Smith's third solo exhibition at ZieherSmith represents an ultimately fruitful distillation, apparently in both the methods of his practice, and subsequently in the visual nature of the roughly dozen works that make it up. "Procession," as Smith's latest collection of works is titled, features the practices and mediums, visuals and themes that have characterized his art; however, in a welcome provocative development, it also finds him honing aspects of his practice.

Smith has long mined the Jamaica of his childhood and family—alongside his identity as an American and immigrant—and of his imagination, for inspiration in his paintings, prints and other multimedia works. Likewise, he has more often than not distorted and obscured what he has chosen to depict, and then layered over, overlapped or applied upon these already rich images from a limited set of patterns, themselves evocative of either scarification and the Kuba stylings of the African Congo, or physical boundaries such as cinder brick walls. These patterns have been created mostly through Smith's trademark method of "picotage," inspired by an 18th-century French practice associated with textile arts, in which he utilizes a ceramic tool to laboriously pick away at and from the surface layer of his photographic prints. The resulting effects can mean different things to different people: decorative, damaged, shimmering; to me they looked like tiny dabs of white paint, meticulously and strategically applied and arranged.



For "Procession," Smith has focused on particular aspects of his practice even as he has transcended its boundaries. The locations and events the photographs which make up the 'body' of the exhibition were taken in and of—Vieques, Puerto Rico, and Brooklyn's 2016 West Indian Day Parade—suggest Smith's geographical and cultural interests expanding beyond Jamaica, towards the pan- or diasporic Afro-Caribbean world. In works citing Miles Davis and John Coltrane compositions, for example *Kind Of Blue I and II* (2016), which consist of blurred picturesque tropical snapshots picotaged with abstract brick wall patterns, nature now shares as much visual representation as the human subjects that have always interested Smith; other works, like *Giant Steps, So What, and Afternoon Brew* (all 2016), all of which impose Caribbean carnival scenes onto those of tropical-esque nature, centering on female dancers, introduce a newfound enthusiasm for the kaleidoscopic. In all of the aforementioned works too, Smith is found to have further mastered and refined his picotage process, effecting a heightened juxtaposition between abstract and more figurative elements.

Alongside his continued employment of brick wall imagery, representative of boundaries, Smith has introduced that of chain-link fencing on works such as 'Manhood,' and in the 6-part 'Blurr' series, where images of scenes are obscured to unrecognizability, becoming compositions of color, glimpsed through a pattern spray-painted in the style of said fencing. Collectively, Smith's receptiveness to new locales—both literally and conceptually, and the maturation of his unique methods and skills, all herald an artist coming into his own, all while in the thick of developing his practice.

The New York Times

Review: 'A Curious Blindness' at Wallach Art Gallery

By HOLLAND COTTER MAY 7, 2015



Paul Anthony Smith's "Port Antonio Market #3" (2013)

If, as it is sometimes said, we live in a postracial era, why are reports about race and racial conflict in the news every day? This is more or less the question asked by three students in the critical and curatorial studies program at Columbia University — Vivian Chui, Tara Kuruvilla and Doris Zhao — in a cogent group exhibition called "A Curious Blindness." The show brings together 18 young artists focusing on the functional fantasies that revolve around race and the purported colorblindness it engenders.... One of this exhibition's great strengths is that much of the art is not easy to parse. By scraping and painting photographs, Paul Anthony Smith turns people in his hometown, Port Antonio, Jamaica, into clouds of scintillation.... This is a beautiful thing.

A version of this review appears in print on May 8, 2015, on page C22 of the New York edition with the headline: 'A Curious Blindness'.

DETAILS

Thursday, July 09, 2015

8 Emerging Artists to Watch Right Now

Remember these names—you'll be hearing a lot more about these up-and-comers soon enough.

BY MAXWELL WILLIAMS



Paul Anthony Smith

AGE: 27

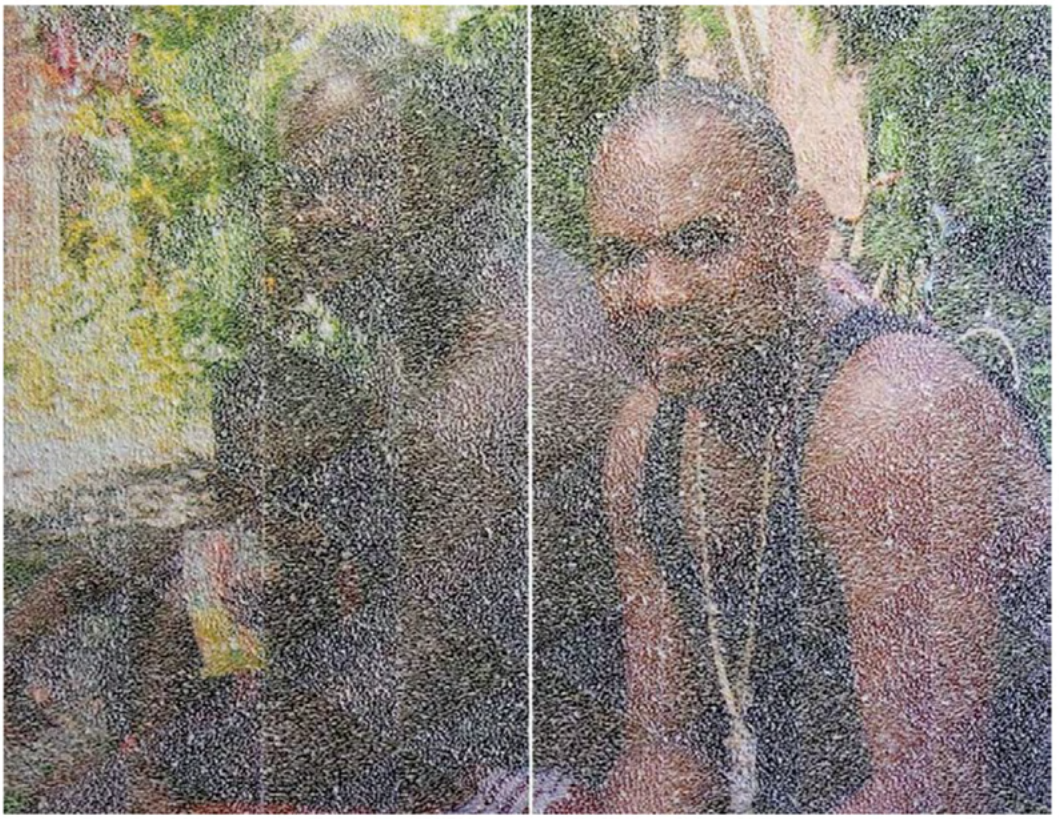
MEDIA: Photographs scored to obscure the identities of their subjects; gauzy paintings of Jamaican laborers

BONA FIDES: Represented by Zieher Smith & Horton in New York, where his works fetch up to $12,000; included in numerous museums' permanent collections

BACKSTORY: Every couple of years, Smith travels from his base in New York City to his childhood home of Port Antonio, Jamaica, where he takes photos of the working-class locals. But he's not a photographer, per se; he either paints over the prints or turns them into "picotages," pricking hundreds of tiny holes in the surface. The resulting works—which the*New York Times* described as "clouds of scintillation"—look like still pictures beamed over a staticky television set. "I'm re-pixelating the image," he says. "With these photos, you don't know the complete story. I'm only showing you the idea and disguising the figures." The process and subject matter reveal the influence of art from the African diaspora. "Paul is a cut-and-mix creator—his painting-picotage aesthetic negotiates political and social inequities," says Erika Dalya Massaquoi, who included Smith in the traveling group show "Disguise: Masks & Global African Art," which visits the Brooklyn Museum of Art next year. This focus on the black experience and his Jamaican heritage is a running theme in Smith's work. "I don't know if it's something I'm always going to explore," he says. "But I yearn to know what I was destined to do if I'd stayed there. It's kind of a missed connection."

NASHVILLE SCENE

June 5, 2015



Summer Reading

When: June 18-27 2015

Zieher Smith & Horton, the gallery in New York's Chelsea neighborhood that has hosted pop-up exhibits in town for the past few years, is bringing *Summer Reading* to a late 19th century building in downtown Nashville for one week only. Alongside work by Nashville-based artists like Karen Seapker and Vadis Turner, the exhibit includes work by Hope Gangloff, Rachel Owens, Allison Schulnik and Paul Anthony Smith. Smith makes work that is completely different from just about everything I've ever seen. His technique involves large-scale photographs, typically shot during his trips to his native Jamaica, which he picks at with a tool just enough to lift the surface of the photograph and displace it without removing it completely. He repeats this method meticulously until the photograph is patterned with geometric forms and looks like pointillism from a distance. Zieher Smith & Horton's pop-ups have typically been a highlight of Nashville's summer calendar among art collectors, students and just about anyone with eyes. Don't miss it.
LAURA HUTSON

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

Skin Deep

by William Corwin - JULY 15TH, 2014

PERLE FINE: WIDE TO THE WIND
MCCORMICK GALLERY, CHICAGO | MAY 2 - JUNE 14, 2014

PAUL ANTHONY SMITH: MANGOS AND CRAB
CARRIE SECRIST GALLERY, CHICAGO | MAY 3 – JUNE 28, 2014

Perle Fine was a great but under-recognized Abstract Expressionist painter; Paul Anthony Smith is a painter, originally from Jamaica, who recently moved from Kansas City to Bushwick. Their innovations in the art of manipulating the form and surface of paper make them odd but not unwilling bedfellows.

The epithet "work on paper" has come to represent a catch-all phrase, one which spans the vast continent of "prints and drawings" and just about any of the small, hard-to-pin-down islands that resist traditional ideas of drawing but are definitely paper-related. Both of these artists draw, but in their strongest works, they assemble or deconstruct form via the material of paper itself.

Fine's swirling, folded, and laminated collages exude a desire to amp-up painting just a notch—not to mid-career Stella—but to a point where the illusion of shadow and thickness achieves a marginal reality and literal presence. Similarly, but inversely, Smith's self-styled *Picotage* technique of working into the surface of large format photographic prints yields a blurried, abstract, and symbolist re-reading of what might be considered the incontrovertible authenticity of a photograph.

Picotage is a method of pricking a surface in order to create pattern. It generally applies to fabric but by applying it to photographs, Smith applies the technique metaphorically to his subjects as well as his images, moving beyond merely scoring the surface for highlighting purposes. His portraits, taken at home in Port Antonio, Jamaica, one year ago are, for the most part, chest level photographs of men. The glossy pigmented surface of the paper has been torn into, turning up countless little flayed chads and creating a field of tiny delicate fingers of paper. The surface intervention is largely consistent over the surface of the image yielding an impression of static; the artist has set up a barrier between the viewer and his subjects. In "Untitled 01" (2014), Smith creates great effect with slight gestures: rubbing away small sections of the print; highlighting the silhouette of a shoulder; delineating the top of a head by doing nothing at all. Smith similarly emphasizes the eyes and mouth of his main subject, a man, by leaving his eye-sockets and lips dark, transmogrifying him into a mask. "Untitled 07" (2014), adjacent to 01, is the reverse, with bulging eyes and whited-out mouth—a vaguely threatening cartoon-like figure. Smith makes the men, who are black, white, superficially painting them with white dots and forcing us to register both readings simultaneously. Picotage becomes the spell of the magician and the historian in the same stroke—
resurfacing the reality of the photograph with a colonial patina that is both stereotypical and stereotyper.

Perle Fine situated her jumping-off point as a re-reading and re-imagining of the major art innovations of the first half of the 20th century, which, when the works in this exhibition were originally made in the late '50s, was a personal reassessment, rather than an academic or historicist

exercise. Fine's etchings present themselves as an over-dinner conversation with Klee, Miro, and Kandinsky: "Weather Vane" (1944) is a work of dramatic contrasts wherein the fragile lines of the drawing are almost overpowered by the sheer absence of ink, while shadowy clouds of residual darkness around the edges and corners have a menacing effect. Later drawings, on the other hand, seem to be a discussion over digestifs with de Kooning and the early work of Guston, among other AbEx artists—her then contemporaries. "Wide to the Wind" (1955), Fine's woodcut from which the show draws its name, utilizes the swooping cyclical motion of the etchings and also points towards the open topographical quality of the drawings from the 1957–58, but its use of irregular and interlocking forms demonstrates the artist's place as an abstract Expressionist innovator. The various forms of "Wide to the Wind" weave and navigate around each other, casting shadows and leaving outlines of themselves in their muted colors—form and void become interchangeable.

"Encounter aka Brouhaha 3" (1959) presents these forms liberated while pasted to a blue paper background. The appliqué method here is not merely a trite means of generating false volume—the cutouts are avowedly flat—but the collage has given them the opportunity to react and critique their surroundings. They leave imprints on the blue field like snow angels, referencing themselves, refusing to engage in pattern or repetition. The blue cut-outs of "Brouhaha" fold and flip-over, revealing a white background and mocking the act of painting itself. In "Curses" (1959), a looming black form like the shape of a bomber or destroyer sits uncomfortable on a bed of writing. Sharp white tooth-like paper cutouts are accentuated by black charcoal lines, but for the most part, Fine relies on the thickness of the paper to define her shifting forms.

Despite their extensive use of paper, both Fine and Smith consider(ed) painting to be their primary medium, as much based on artificial art hierarchies as an artist's aspirations. The institution of painting no longer outranks drawing and paper based works, especially in the face of conceptual art and the delegated fabrication of work taking place in the contemporary artists practice. This added wiggle room, afforded when an artist doesn't feel the world is looking over her/his shoulder, often allows for production that rivals more serious and finished work in its innovative capabilities. As a result, the works in these two exhibitions equally contends with each artist's larger painted canvases, both in their originality and execution.

art ltd.®

July/August 2014 Review



CHICAGO

Paul Anthony Smith: "Mangos and Crab"
at Carrie Secrist Gallery

Jamaican-born, Brooklyn-based artist Paul Anthony Smith has become known for a technique he calls "picotage," in which he uses a sharp ceramicist's tool to pick and tear at the surface of a photograph, pulling up the white paper from beneath the glossy surface. From a distance, the effect of this process appears as if glitter or flocking has been strategically adhered to the photo's surface, but up close, this laborious action is not additive, but delicately destructive. Equally as significant as how this effect is administered, is onto what type of imagery it is applied. Each of these intricately torn photographs is a portrait of an average Jamaican citizen, their faces carefully disguised by flecks of picked paper. Immediately imparted in a series of untitled picotage portraits are undertones of the history of racism; the sitters' identities and individualism are dissolved through the repetitive picking pattern, and their dark skin is overtaken with the unnatural white of the paper. This manipulation of complexions also nods to the controversial trend of skin bleaching, popular among many Jamaicans. However, countering these troubling associations are positive ones as well. Smith cites the picotage process as a reference to coming-of-age tattooing and scarification traditions, while several of the portraits feature picotage patterning that highlights eye sockets and mouths—subtle, formal nods to traditional Jamaican tribal masks. In these works, Smith's masking alternates deftly between the suppression and the power inherent in anonymity.

Where the picotage works are highly detailed, Smith's oil on canvas works in this exhibition are simple and graphic. In his paintings, Smith's interest in depicting average Jamaicans takes the form of airport workers. In several small paintings that share the title *44.2258° N, 76.5967° W*, Smith isolates the reflective, striped vests worn by those who work on the runways. These small works are flat and formal, supplementary to *004 TARMAC*, the most powerful piece in the exhibition. Here, four employees are casually gathered beneath the shadow of an airplane wing, and unlike the sitters of the picotage photographs, viewers can see the unique features of this painting's subjects. These figures are depicted from a vantage point slightly above, as if from an airplane window, effectively turning the viewer into a visitor, a tourist, getting only a glimpse of the lives of these working-class citizens. Both in his picotage works and his paintings, Smith is adept at keeping the messages of his identity-based practice open, complex and rich.

—ROBIN DLUZEN

"44.2258° N, 76.5967° W #1"
2014, **Paul Anthony Smith**
OIL ON CANVAS, 44" x 34"
PHOTO: COURTESY CARRIE SECRIST GALLERY

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photograph

PAUL ANTHONY SMITH : MANGOS AND CRAB

By Jason Foumberg - 05/23/2014



Paul Anthony Smith, *Untitled 06*, 2014.

Mangos and Crab is Paul Anthony Smith's excellent first solo show at Carrie Secrist Gallery (through June 14). The title recalls two foods endemic to the artist's birthplace in Jamaica; indeed, Smith conceptualized the series of altered photographs and several oil paintings during a recent visit there. He now lives and works in Brooklyn.

Smith's subject matter is portraiture. For this show, he altered nine inkjet prints of portraits (all untitled, from 2014) by pricking their surfaces with a mechanical tool. Hundreds of raised paper flecks destroy the surface of each print but create a pattern of optical effects. Viewed from either oblique angle, right or left, the faces in the portraits emerge or dissolve. The effect is subtle, with careful attention to the eyes and mouth, those expressive portals of personality.

The artist calls his pricking technique *picotage*. He borrowed the term from an 18th-century textile decoration process invented in England and popularized in France, in which groupings of pinpricks from a printed matrix create shadowed or patterned impressions.



Paul Anthony Smith, *Untitled 06*, 2014.

Smith's *picotage* process defaces and disfigures his portraits. The people become unidentifiable, although vague traits remain: some are men, some are female, and all have black skin. The allover pocks of white paper evoke the current Jamaican beauty ritual of skin bleaching in the former British colony, in which black faces are lightened.

Even if Smith is effectively destroying his prints, introducing a critical commentary on his subject matter, the obsessively hand-worked objects also reflect an intimate engagement with the photographs. Whoever these people are, their faces have been consumed by the artist's hand and absorbed by his memory. The private relationship of artist and sitter is pointedly made inaccessible, even while it's on public display.

The International Review of African American Art
Summer 2013



Paul Anthony Smith
Alfred, 2011
oil on panel, 24 x 18 in.
Courtesy of ZieherSmith
Photograph by E.G. Schempf

PAUL ANTHONY SMITH
IDENTITY INSIDE OUT

JODY B. CUTLER

"I am made of the irrational; I wade in the irrational. Irrational up to my neck. And now let my voice ring out."
FRANTZ FANON, "THE FACT OF BLACKNESS," *BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS.*

IN SPRING 2013, PAUL ANTHONY SMITH (b. 1988) presented a dichotomous artistic identity in his first solo exhibition, *Transience*, at ZieherSmith in New York. A series of original photographs pricked at the surface to adorn their prosaic subjects in faux-furry costumes—or "picotages," as Smith calls them—are juxtaposed with straightforward, figurative paintings and works on paper. Inevitably, a dialogue emerges between the two series, which contrasts interior and exterior experience, public and private identities, and naturalistic and surrealistic tendencies in art.

The figurative works are based on casual photographs of airport workers on the job. The locale in these, as well as the picotages, is Smith's native Jamaica. Since relocating to the United States at age nine, he has studied its history and cultivated an active cultural memory of his homeland. The transport theme in his exhibition evokes empirical and metaphorical links with Caribbean society throughout its modern history.

Labor in the Jamaican tourism industry looms large, as Smith expresses in this body of work with an emotional reserve. Unified in color and symbolic occupational caste, the subjects appear collectively self-absorbed and beneath the radar of those whose journeys they facilitate. Subtle postures and gestures read as codes of character as well as communication. For example, the weight-shifting stance of the figure at left in *Tarmac #4*, 2013, or the slight shrug of the male in *Shell*, 2013, read as reactions within the scene but also mannerisms recognized and differentiated among colleagues. Indeed, these are individuals who have grown out of Smith's earlier interest in more conventional portraiture with the specific aim of representing Jamaican people.

The picotages bridge the commonplace to the otherworldly. Their speckling, which appears fuzzy from close up and shimmery from a distance, is created with a sharp clay-trimming tool, signaling Smith's easy shift between mediums; he worked extensively in ceramics through art school at the Kansas City Art Institute along with painting and photography. The non-tourist settings of these dimly-lit works—scraps of yards and backstreets—are animated by subjects made strange through the hand-hewn ornamentation.

Smith's transformation of the mundane to the uncanny brings to mind the aesthetics of Surrealism. The main goal of early Surrealist art was to confound viewers with odd, illogical imagery,



Paul Anthony Smith
Nightwalkers, 2013
unique picotage and spray paint on pigment print, 29 x 24 in.
Courtesy of ZieherSmith, Photograph by Joshua Ferdinand

thereby freeing the mind from the conventional reasoning that left a morally bankrupt Europe vulnerable to widespread fascism. Polymath Frantz Fanon, associated with the *Négritude* movement, had more personal motives for "wading in the irrational," as he explains in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

> *I had rationalized the world and the world had rejected me on the basis of color prejudice. Since no agreement was possible on the level of reason, I threw myself back toward unreason.*

Fanon would go on to claim and thereby self-define the white misnomer of blackness, presaging the "Black Is Beautiful" slogan of the following decade. Smith's picotages tread on this psychological terrain.

A Second Black Skin

Smith makes explicit an Afrocentric and diasporic direction in two picotages that superimpose beaded Kuba masks, picked over to heighten their optical buzz, onto straight portrait photographs; all recall Caribbean carnival and African masquerades. The images of some figures include a balaclava-type hooding that conjures armor, criminal disguise, and space suits. Beneath them, the subjects are shielded from the outside, yet shining from the inside out, or, from another perspective, simultaneously hiding and preening.

The frequent wide-open, staring eyes of Smith's subjects through their masks emphasizes a spiritual dynamic harking back to the metaphoric "veil" and "second sight" of W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903. Du Bois describes the negative cast of "the veil" maintained by whites to shut out black autonomy and access in US society:

> *I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt.*

It does leave the black man (Du Bois's collective subject) "gifted with second sight" as some form of compensation. In fact,



Paul Anthony Smith
Ras, 2013
unique picotage and spray paint on pigment print, 29 x 24 in.
Courtesy of ZieherSmith, Photograph by Joshua Ferdinand

this positive element has been increasingly elaborated as an advantageous ability to see oneself and the world from two points of view. However, Du Bois stated clearly the negative effect of this "double-consciousness" as a psychological splitting that required merger for "a truer and better self."

A half-century after *The Souls of Black Folk*, Fanon asserted that a fragmented psyche caused by racism might be healed by dramatic cultural and political black pride. Conjoining the ideas of both thinkers, Smith's veiling in his picotages appears generated from the inside out, with the artist playing the role of a catalyst for a multifaceted self-awareness. They convey black-derived (rather than Fanon's white-imposed) masks as second black skins—a purposeful layering of black identity—and disregard the historical black/white dichotomy. Equally, it is tempting to view the airport pictures and picotages within *Transience* as the literal echoing of a self-affirming double-consciousness in two visual modes—the latter impenetrable, beyond their exoticism, to outsiders.

At this early stage in his career, Smith has taken a number of bold risks in terms of his artistic and personal identity and thrown down the gauntlet for committed, identifiable themes based on real life. Judging from his first national display, he has accomplished the Surrealist aim of presenting interior and exterior reality as two elements struggling to become one.

Jody B. Cutler is an art historian based in New York.



Paul Anthony Smith
Tarmac #4, 2013
oil and spray paint on canvas,
72 x 96 in.
Courtesy of ZieherSmith
Photograph by Joshua Ferdinand

THE HUFFINGTON POST

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

Black Artists: 30 Contemporary Art Makers Under 40 You Should Know

02/26/2013

As Black History Month comes to a close, we've picked 30 young black artists who are contributing to the ongoing conversation of race and representation in contemporary art. Whether through sculpture, photography, video or performance, each artist illuminates the complexity of the self with a unique and bold vision.

From Kalup Linzy's soap opera shorts to Kehinde Wiley's traditional portraits updated with black models, the following young artists show there is no single way to address race in contemporary culture. Playful or meditative, sarcastic or somber, the following artists tackle the subject with a ferocious curiosity, passion and vulnerability.

Paul Anthony Smith

Born in 1988, Smith works in painting, collage, mixed media and ceramics to create portraits spanning different eras, races and artistic styles. Many of Smith's works obscure skin and faces until they resemble ceremonial masks, as in the image pictured.



Untitled, picotage measuring 10x8 inches
Courtesy of Scott Zieher

a+e



KEITH MYERS | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Paul Anthony Smith's Kansas City studio is filled with works inspired by Jamaican culture and history. Raised in Miami, the Jamaican-born artist is a 2010 graduate of the Kansas City Art Institute. He currently has a one-person show in New York.



JOSHUA FERDINAND | NERMAN MUSEUM

The Nerman Museum at Johnson County Community College recently acquired this picotage-on-pigment print by Paul Anthony Smith from his exhibit in New York.

VISUAL ART | Paul Anthony Smith

JAMAICA CALLS TO A KC ARTIST

His shimmering pictoage effect has him on a roll with a show in New York and some national buzz.

By ALICE THORSON
The Kansas City Star

Three years out of the Kansas City Art Institute with a bachelor of fine arts in ceramics, Paul Anthony Smith is enjoying a phenomenal run.

The 25-year-old artist landed a one-person show in New York, and in February, Smith was named one of the nation's top 30 black artists under 40 by the Huffington Post.

The article featured one of his striking picotage portraits, made by picking at the surface of the image with a sharp tool. The effect is eerie and transformative.

But if you talk to Smith in his second-floor home/studio in the Crossroads Arts District, where he sleeps surrounded by works in progress, recognition is not the first thing on his mind.

Instead it's his yearning for the ocean.

Born in Jamaica and raised in Miami, Smith is still adjusting to life away from the water.

"I'm landlocked," he said. "I was around the ocean for 18 years. That changed drastically when I came to the Midwest."

But he likes it here, and Kansas City has believed in him from the start.

"Every once in awhile I will meet a student that makes a strong impression on me," said Raechell Smith (no relation), director of the school's H&R Block Artspace.

"I saw (Paul) in a foundations studio at the Kansas City Art Institute his first year here, and I invited him to come and work with us at the Artspace. He quickly became an enthusiastic student of contemporary art."

Through the school, Paul Smith was awarded a Kenneth R. Ferguson

SEE SMITH | D3

VISUAL ART

SMITH: Adjusting to life away from the ocean

FROM D1

scholarship in 2008 and a Copaken scholarship to the Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass Village, Colo., in 2009. After graduating he landed an Urban Culture Project studio residency from the Charlotte Street Foundation.

Despite a major shout-out from the Jamaica Observer for his Huffington Post appearance, Smith has no plans to move back to the land of his birth.

"I want experience through the world," he said.

Yet his ties to Jamaica, rekindled during a fall 2011 trip to visit relatives, are obvious in his work.

Noting that "my parents are from the working class," he often paints and sculpts the tarmac workers who labor at Jamaica's airport.

"I realized they're an essential part of the tourism industry," Smith said, standing before a large canvas in his studio. "You see them in a group conversing, but you don't know what they're talking about."

In contrast to his other paintings of Jamaicans, whom he portrays as "comfortable" and "laid back," the tarmac figures are painted in poses of authority.

"They have jobs," Smith said. "Not everyone in Jamaica is employed. I look at them as an essential part of the infrastructure for the airports. The tourist economy depends on them."

The tarmac paintings, like Smith's other works, are based on photographs, which he manipulates and simplifies, often adding flat colored backgrounds that heighten the contrast with the workers' dark skin.

Another painting in progress portrays a trash collector. Smith encountered him cleaning the streets at 7 a.m. with a shovel and rake. "I took out the background," he said. Sometimes he paints out entire figures.

Smith edits to emphasize what he considers to be important.

"Icilda" (2011) is a portrait of his grandmother, one of many based on family photos dating to the 1970s, '80s and '90s. "I took the nose out and made the glasses glittery," he said.

It was the smile that lights up her face that he wanted to emphasize.

Family and family history are never far from Smith's thoughts. "My first two sketchbooks came from my mother," he said. "I drew on every page."

"My grandfather on my mother's side was from Cuba. I never met him; he passed away two years before I was born. His parents worked in sugarcane fields in Cuba. My grandfather and his sister were brought to Jamaica as servants and ran away."

Smith's mother now lives in England; his father is in Miami. Smith has many aunts, uncles and cousins in Jamaica.

This summer, he is headed to Ghent, N.Y., for an Art Omi International Artists Residency through the Charlotte Street Foundation.

Smith's last residency, a spring 2012 sojourn at Colorado's Anderson Ranch, proved fruitful. It was a ceramics residency, and he produced a series of pedestal-scale ceramic figures of the tarmac workers portrayed in his paintings.

While he was in Colorado, he also developed his particular technique of picotage, using a ceramics tool to tear up the top layer of scanned photographic images, giving them a glimmering, confetti-like aspect.



IMAGES FROM JOSHUA FERDINAND | ZIEHERSMITH GALLERY, NEW YORK

As seen in "Funeral #1" (2013), Smith's picotage alterations endow his figures with a magical otherworldly presence and imbue their common activities with an aura of ritual.

"I started thinking of tattoos and scarification," he said, "which is a big part of coming of age."

The wood-handled potter's needle used in ceramics to score and trim clay "looks like a prison tool," he said. Smith also acknowledges a certain sinister dimension that results from the masks and face-hiding balaclavas he creates with the picotage technique.

But his alterations also endow his figures with a magical otherworldly presence and imbue their common activities with an aura of ritual.

In "Non Tourist Location" (2012), casually clad locals sit side by side on a curb, their skin and faces shimmering as if encrusted with diamonds from Smith's application of picotage. He gives the same treatment to funeralgoers, anonymous men and women, generals, politicians and a queen.

Jamaican culture and history are recurrent touchstones of Smith's picotage works.

Colonized by the Spanish and then the British, the country achieved independence in 1962 after a long struggle in which Norman Washington Manley, a barrister who established the country's first political party in 1938, played a prominent role.

Manley helped negotiate Jamaica's independence from Britain, serving as the country's chief minister and then premier from 1959 to 1962. Smith portrays him in "Norman Manley's Cabinet" (2012), acknowledging the group's activist orientation by endowing each of the men in the group photograph with a shimmering pictoage balaclava.

Smith also created a picotage portrait of Queen Elizabeth. "They are some of the root individuals," he said. "Queen Elizabeth was there when Jamaica received independence."

Haile Selassie, the former emperor of Ethiopia and a leader of Africa's anticolonialist struggle, is another favorite subject. Among Jamaica's Rastafarians, whose name comes from Selassie's birth name, Ras Tafari, he is revered as an incarnation of Christ. In "Systems of Hierarchy: Emperor Haile Selassie I" (2012), Smith conveys his sacred presence by covering his uniformed figure with picotage.



"Queen Elizabeth was there when Jamaica received independence," says Smith, who reworked her image in his unique picotage on pigment print "Queen" (2013).

The technique is intrinsically edgy, combing defacement with the trappings of respect. When Smith showed an earlier piece of Selassie endowed with a picotage ski mask to his father, "he got offended," he said. "He is a former Rastafarian and felt it was rude."

It was also at Anderson Ranch that Smith developed a long-simmering interest in African masks, initially stimulated by an encounter during his student days with a Songye female mask in the collection of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

"I began playing around with masks in 2010," he said. Two years later, at Anderson, he began drawing on the scanned photographs he uses as a base, using markers and colored pencils to cover his subjects' faces with African masks that he then enhanced with picotage.

The Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art bought one from his current show at the Ziehersmith gallery, in New York's Chelsea district, for its Oppenheimer Collection, funded by Tony and Marti Oppenheimer. Titled "Ras," it's a depiction of Haile Selassie's father, Ras Makonnen Woldemikael.

"Ras means prince, king, some male of the throne," Smith said.

Bruce Hartman, Nerman Museum director, said he and the Oppenheimers had been watching Smith's work since his KCAI degree show in 2010, and they decided to buy one from his New York exhibit after seeing his new picotage pieces in December at the Art Basel Miami Fair. The New York show of paintings and works on paper runs through April 20.

"We were immediately captivated by the mystery and jewel-like quality of Ras," Hartman said. "This work depicts a traditional Kuba mask, meticulously rendered by picking away at the photograph's surface, overlaying a portrait. It obscures the sitter's face while simultaneously heightening our curiosity regarding the negated image."

The Dolphin Gallery has just put a new one on view. "Woman #2" (2013) wears an ornate mask in a geometric design bordered with cowrie shells.

Smith's adjustments often impart a slightly threatening cast to his portrayals. In the case of the tarmac workers, he is well aware that their airport setting immediately provokes associations with terrorism. The masks, he says, "are intimidating when you see them. The ambiance is magical, like seeing a prehistoric figure."

He has been spending a lot of time lately researching Songye and Kuba masks and is struck by how different they feel from the masks he has encountered at craft markets in Jamaica. "They're made for tourists, rather than for use in rituals," he said. "They have a different feel from African masks."

These days Smith is looking around for additional residencies and is working as an associate preparator at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. He is helping to digitize the museum's Hallmark Photographic Collection.

Smith's reputation is increasingly tied to his photography-based works, following his emergence as a ceramicist.

In a 2010 exhibit at Block Artspace celebrating the Art Institute's 125th anniversary, Smith showed "World Histories: Ancestral Transcience," a sculpture depicting the head and shoulders of a black man emerging from the top of an oil drum. An earlier body of work, shown at the Belger Arts Center at the end of 2010, keyed off the 2008 presidential election.

Smith used porcelaneous stoneware to create a series of relief portraits, merging his face with those of American presidents and candidates. The format for "Paul Lincoln," "Paul Obama" and "Paul McCain" was inspired by the terracotta roundels of an Italian Renaissance sculptor, Luca della Robbia, and framed by flourishes borrowed from the dollar bill.

"You got to be born in America to be president," said Smith, who became an American citizen in 2006.

Along with his curiosity and work ethic, Smith's interest in current events made a deep impression on Smith at Block Artspace.

"As a student he did some work about the Iraq war and was really looking at a lot of imagery coming out of Haiti after the storm. He was interested in how the media portrays certain events," she recalled. "(Right now) I think he's exploring and learning how to use and manipulate materials, and he continues to find his own voice in terms of creating a narrative.

"He's a consummate ceramics artist, and I love his collages and works on paper," she added. "I think he is interested in deeper issues of cultural identity and how those things are imaged."

Smith exhibited in the Kansas City Flatfile exhibit at Block Artspace in 2010 and 2012, and it was there, Smith said, that New York gallery owner Andrea Zieher first saw the artist's work.

"They had an email exchange for a couple of months," Smith said, "and she invited him to do a show."

On Thursday, Smith learned that he is the recipient of a $10,000 visual artists fellowship from the Charlotte Street Foundation.

"I'm going to go to Jamaica," he said, "and to England to visit my mom."

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the PARIS REVIEW

The Fabric of Memory

By The Paris Review March 5, 2021

In Paul Anthony Smith's Untitled (Dead Yard)*, a figure stands with arms outstretched in the midst of a haze of ghostly breeze-blocks. The physical appears to commune with the spiritual; unreality encroaches on the real. It's a startling effect, one that persists throughout Smith's second solo show with Jack Shainman Gallery, "Tradewinds" (on view through April 3). Using a needled wooden tool, Smith painstakingly works over his photographic prints, puncturing the surface and chipping away at the ink. Each stipple, each architectural flourish laces the images with the fabric of memory. This is not reality; this is the world in recollection, the white noise of time and distance always threatening to drown out the past. A selection of images from "Tradewinds" appears below.*



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *BREEZE OFF YU SOUL*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 40 X 54". © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



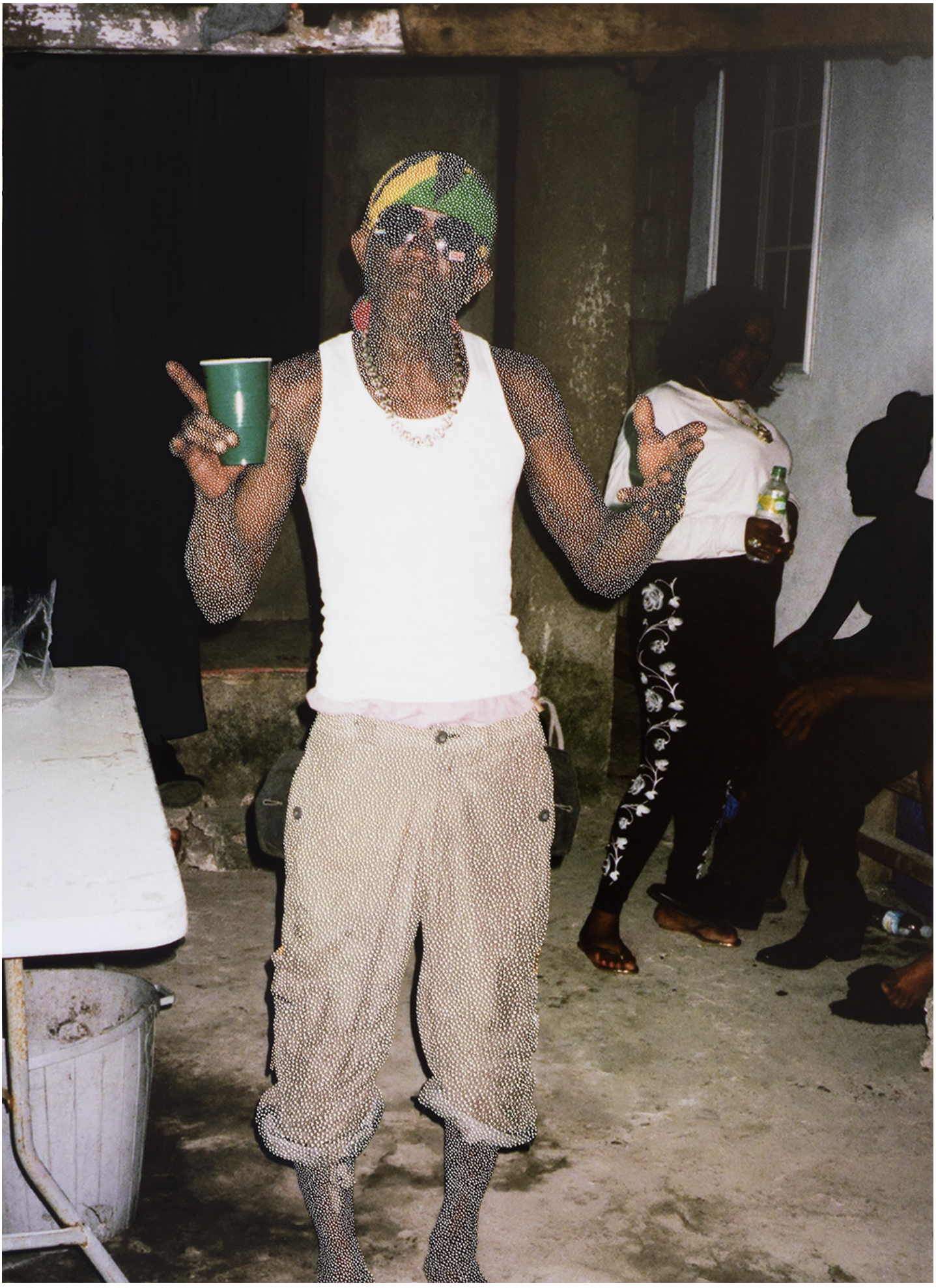
PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *DOG AN DUPPY DRINK RUM*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE, SPRAY PAINT, AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 72 X 104″. © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *ISLANDS #3*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 60 X 40″.
© PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 68 X 96″.
© PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *YAAD STAR*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT AND GOUACHE ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 60 X 40″. © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 40 X 60″.
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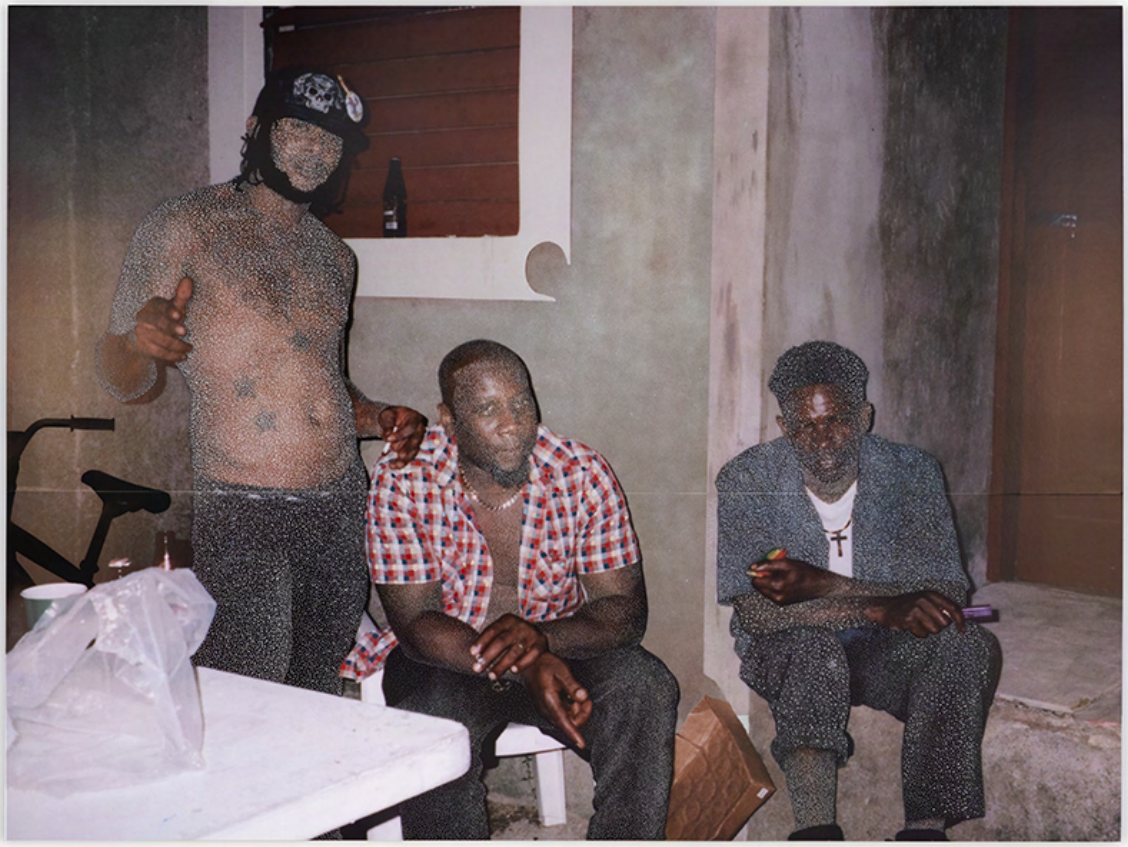
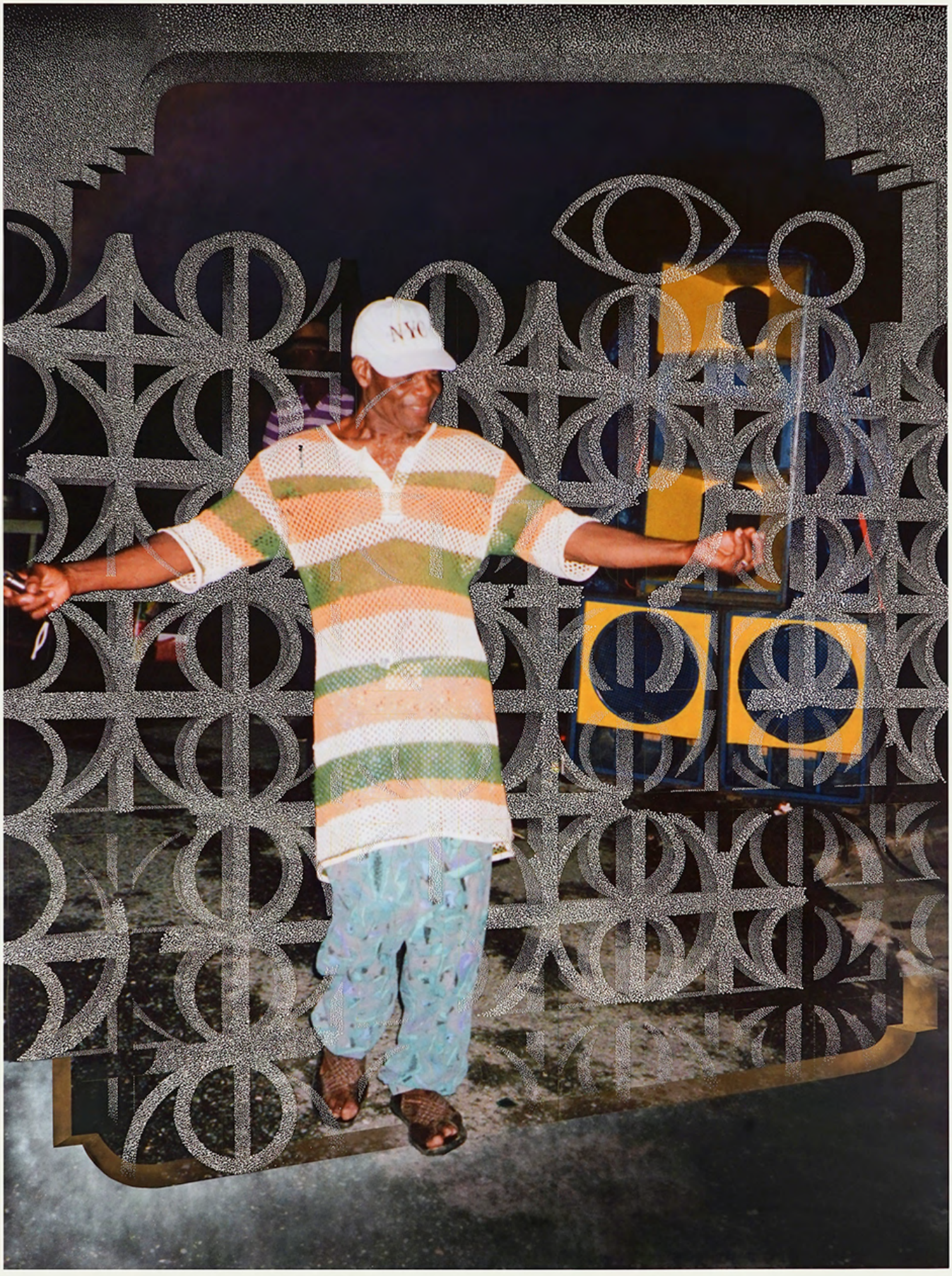


PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE, SPRAY PAINT, AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 72 X 96″. © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *WHO JAH BLESS…*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 60 X 40". © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED (DEAD YARD)*, 2020, UNIQUE PICOTAGE ON INKJET PRINT WITH SPRAY PAINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 95 7/8 X 71 7/8″. © PAUL ANTHONY SMITH. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK.



PAUL ANTHONY SMITH, *UNTITLED*, 2020–2021, UNIQUE PICOTAGE WITH SPRAY PAINT ON INKJET PRINT, MOUNTED ON MUSEUM BOARD AND SINTRA, 60 X 40″.
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ELEPHANT

March 2, 2021
By Ravi Ghosh

Paul Anthony Smith Picks Away at Photos to Reveal the Inner Lives of His Subjects

“I’m using various patterns of disguise.” In Tradewinds, the Jamaica-born artist uses a picotage technique to trace migration beyond the labels of colonialism.



Islands #4, 2020-1. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

During the age of transatlantic slavery, trade winds allowed sailors to cross the oceans with greater efficiency at different times of the year. Travel from Europe or Africa to the Americas benefited from these seasonal winds, creating systems of westwards movement either side of the equator, and forever entwining the practice of slavery with Earth’s meteorology.

Migration—both forced and unforced—has been a major influence for Paul Anthony Smith, whose latest exhibition of photography-based works borrows its title from these natural cycles. Smith’s practice seeks to reconcile the differences between populations, cultures, landscapes and languages that have been displaced or partitioned by colonialism. He casts his lens from east to west Jamaica; Aruba to Barbados; and on the Caribbean diasporas of London and New York. He retraces historic patterns of movement, but empowers his subjects to exist beyond these colonial labels.



Paul Anthony Smith, Dog an Duppy Drink Rum, 2020-1. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

“I think about these people that I show occupying spaces and being themselves and being explorers and travellers,” Jamaica-born Smith tells me from New York City. He shoots subjects in a range of casual settings—their familiar, homely environments representing a milestone in each of their journeys, rather than a fixed stasis. The exhibition emerged from his own journeys in 2019. While visiting London for Notting Hill Carnival, Smith was informed of the death of a relative in Jamaica and returned to partake in the traditional Dead Yard commemorations—an extended wake-style celebration involving dance, games and large feasts. “While that was happening I was thinking a lot about fatherhood and manhood,” Smith says. “What does it mean to be a man from the Caribbean and to be a provider?”

Later that year he returned to the UK especially to see a solo show by abstract painter Mark Bradford at Hauser & Wirth in London. Smith’s work shares a textural idiom with Bradford’s vast, Rauschenberg-inspired canvases in that both layer their surfaces. But where Bradford builds outwards using paper, Smith uses a picotage technique to pick and partially remove tiny sections of the prints to create a dotted, almost disappearing effect. “The scales mean that there’s a lenticular quality to how the image works, because when you walk in front of it, it kind of shifts,” Smith explains. Exposing the board beneath the print in a single direction allows the images to almost protrude towards the viewer, while simultaneously appearing flattened from other angles.



Paul Anthony Smith, Untitled [details] (left; centre-left; centre-right); Dog an Duppy Drink Rum [detail] (right), 2020-1. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

We discuss the acclaim afforded to the works of Titus Kaphar over the past year, which take this idea of creative subtraction to its extreme by completely cutting subjects from the canvas. Is Smith’s technique akin to this—or does he view surface manipulation as a kind of addition? “In this show, I’m revealing a bit more to the audience than I usually do,” Smith says of his sparser picotage in Tradewinds. Whereas his previous exhibitions have focused specifically on the Windrush era and modernism, the latest Jack Shainman show is more domestic and intimate. “I’m giving you a bit more insight into who I am rather than picking away at my subjects as much. I’m using various patterns of disguise.”



Paul Anthony Smith, Untitled (Dead Yard), 2020. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

This impetus has allowed Smith to synthesise this cultural moment—one in which Black death is ubiquitous—into these new works. The result is a mixture of memory, commemoration and quiet contemplation, away from the carnival and music-oriented impulses of previous exhibitions like Junction (2019). In Untitled (Dead Yard), a man walks down a nighttime street, arms outstretched and wearing an unknowing smile. Smith's picotage resembles a superimposed metal gate around him, which seems to lift the subject from his quotidian surroundings. "I was trying to be a bit more vulnerable with my subjects and show more human nature," Smith explains. "These calm candid shots rather than the more performative aspects of Junction, which was about music."



Both: Untitled, 2020-1. © Paul Anthony Smith. Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery.

Although not addressing the pandemic and 2020's racial justice movements in a photojournalistic sense, Smith views his Black and diaspora subjects as part of wider historical moments, despite focusing on this vulnerability—and the ritual and communities which enable it. Two untitled shots show the simple closeness of a friendly gathering: shared drinks, brightly painted nails and open shirts for the thick Caribbean air. "We come on earth for such a short time, and we are celebrated a few times in our lives," Smith reflects. "I think death is much closer to us than we think—but there's something amazing about it."











