

DIEDRICK BRACKENS: SHAPE OF A FEVER BELIEVER

on view through 10 April, 2021
Oakville Galleries at Centennial Square

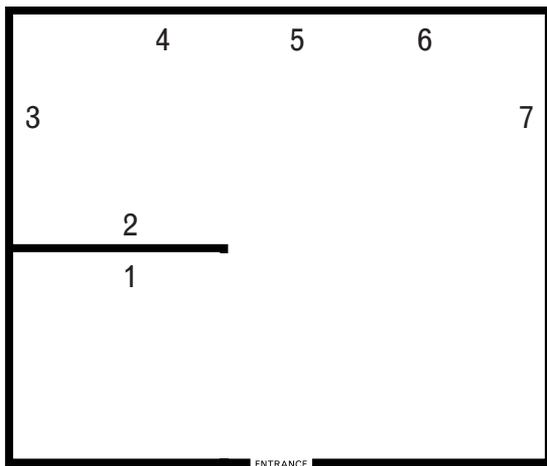
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Known for his hand-dyed, hand-woven tapestries, Los Angeles-based artist Diedrick Brackens combines figurative and abstract iconography to allude to larger cultural, political, and allegorical narratives. Within his intricate, large-scale work, he coaxes emotive, meditative reflections on dark, fractured histories and interweaves sensations of tenderness, trauma, healing, and legacy against a backdrop of American life.

For *shape of a fever believer*, his first exhibition in Canada, Brackens brings together a selection of his recent textile work. In this new body of work, the artist centres on the metaphoric and lived experience of fatality associated with disease and sickness, namely HIV/AIDS and its disproportionate effect on Black, queer, and other marginalized communities. A series of silhouetted black figures against abstracted landscapes of colour participate in rituals and fantasies of desire and kinship. His repeated use of bare silhouettes, along with allegorical symbols—mosquitoes, veins, fire—lend to the creation of a collective mythology.

As told through the body language of each depicted figure, Brackens' stories are rooted as readily in vulnerability and care—the beauty and joy they can provide—as in danger, brutality, and intergenerational trauma. Brackens tenderly and compassionately engages in a resignification of disease, seeking to liberate infection from its malignant pathologies and to realize intimacy, freedom, and vigour for his subjects. With each scene, he engages with the affects of the Black experience in the United States, past and present.



- 1 ***lifesavers*** 2020
woven cotton and acrylic yarn
90 x 84 in
Collection of Federico Castro Debernardi
- 2 ***fire makes some dragons*** 2020
woven cotton and acrylic yarn
85 x 74 in
Hudgins Family Collection, New York
- 3 ***flying geese*** 2020
woven cotton and acrylic yarn
98 x 90 in
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York
- 4 ***there is a leak*** 2020
woven cotton and acrylic yarn
85 x 74 in
Collection of Elliott & Kimberly Perry, Memphis
- 5 ***shape of a fever believer*** 2020
woven cotton and acrylic yarn
84 x 82 in
Collection of Steve Corkin & Dan Maddalena
- 6 ***blessed are the mosquitoes*** 2020
woven cotton and acrylic yarn
82 x 79 in
Courtesy of The Studio Museum in Harlem; Museum purchases with funds provided by an anonymous donor, the Acquisition Committee, Amelia Ogunlesi, Patricia Blanchet, Pippa Cohen, Iva Mills, and Lise Wilks
- 7 ***summer somewhere (for Danez)*** 2020
woven cotton and acrylic yarn
100 x 105 in
Private Collection, Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

a storm of bees, wind, affairs between us

we are not immaculate. not roses, lilies, apples, or carrots.
we leave soil behind our ears, "it's natural, not dirty." you chide.
we are an imperfect pair: squash, begonia, hazelnut, willow, oak.
we find nothing but meager, level, love; onion and a boiled rind.

let's find a way to stitch ourselves together,
figure another way to practice feeding each other.
we will never be perfect lovers; cooped between a fan
of petals, we will never be bound by a single vine.

what is beneath your shadow skin? radiation in your blood?
pink. I imagine the color on your insides and it fills pulsing parts of me.
let's spend nights opening up in search of faded valentines.
did your mother save your umbilical cord?

swollen blooms, warm in a warm place, we are mirrors on a blanket.
~~whatever feeds on us brings us closer, how can we ever lack?~~
we should not lift our heads or risk being thrown from this simple—

sixty million and more

under the moon, for a bundle of wings,
we bought a plague

knowing that I might never see it end,
I split fish for the faithless.
who are not meant to survive this
well. what else can I offer; this meal,
my loins, a dance?

let us share a single flask
that we cant drink empty

spirits robed in daddy, baby, boy, papi,
(or the other names we call ourselves,)
demand immortality.
hear them pleading to be remembered.
I will sing to them all at once if you leave

some things under my tongue;
seven seeds, a coin, a map.

The moon opened and closes
soon. I might see it bloom plague's end.

how do you rip bad from blood?

blessed are the mosquitoes

You ain't got to love me, but you gonna know that I love you.

—*Moonlight*

the first time I tasted you my love, I fell
upon the grand prairie of your neck.
you are sweet wind. I wait for you to exhale.
I warm at the edge of your breath.
your skin is the only living place I alight.
my love, I will be as quiet as possible,
as tender in my digging as a pest can be.

my love, did you know I can live months
without a meal? I forgive you. It has been a week
and I cannot sense you anywhere.
in our usual place there has only been shoaling clouds
of oil; lavender, mint, citronella, and a chemical
neither of us can name. I forgive you,
but do not adorn for me my love.

I need to gather just a grain of you. siphon you
into me one minuscule bead at a time.
don't break me open, we need to go as far
as we can. whatever is inside me is there,
my love, don't try and retrieve it now.

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