

Henry

THICK AS MUD Feb 4 – May 7, 2023



Candice Lin, *Swamp Fat* [detail], 2021. Scagliola, ceramics, earth, clay, mortar, scented lard. Installation view of Prospect 5: Yesterday we said tomorrow, 2021-22, University of New Orleans St. Claude Gallery, New Orleans. Courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly Gallery. Photo: Jose Cotto.

Seattle, WA (December 1, 2022)— *Thick as Mud* explores how mud animates relationships between people and place, with works by an international roster of artists: **Dineo Seshee Bopape**, **Diedrick Brackens**, **Ali Cherri**, **Candice Lin**, **Christine Howard Sandoval**, **Rose B. Simpson**, **Eve Tagny**, and **Sasha Wortzel**. Across multiple geographies and a range of aesthetic approaches—from figurative clay sculpture to audio recordings of the swamp—these artists engage mud as a material or subject that shapes personal and collective histories, memory, and imagination.

Both water and earth, mud exists in an in-between state. As a medium that dissolves binaries, mud invites a blurring of past and present, personal and political, bodies and landscape, feeling and knowing. In various ways, the artworks in *Thick as Mud* move across these porous boundaries, disrupting finite linear narratives and dominant hierarchies that shape which places and stories matter.

Drawing from her Santa Clara Pueblo heritage, **Rose B. Simpson** (born 1983, Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico; lives in Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico) engages clay as a medium of ancestral wisdom. Her figural sculptures honor the mutual relationship of the body and the land historically denied within colonial systems. Similarly, across drawing and sculpture, **Christine Howard Sandoval** (born 1975, Anaheim, California; lives in Vancouver, British Columbia) uses adobe, a desert building material with close connections to her own familial lineage, to reclaim cultural memory and to address legacies of extractive labor and displacement inflicted by Spanish missions on the Indigenous people of California.

Across her work, **Eve Tagny** (born 1986, Montréal, Québec; lives in Montréal, Québec) uses the body to investigate the power dynamics inscribed within constructed landscapes. In a new installation for *Thick as Mud*, Tagny employs both performance video and sculpture—including architectural forms made from cob, a mud-based building material—to explore conditions of alienation and belonging produced through both the visible structures and latent histories of the built environment. Like Tagny, **Ali Cherri** (born 1976, Beirut, Lebanon; lives in Paris, France) addresses disrupted landscapes, investigating the political ecologies embedded in these places. In his video installation *Of Men and Gods and Mud* (2022), Cherri traces the history of the Merowe Dam in northern Sudan through the labor and lives of seasonal mud-brick workers displaced by the dam's construction.

Mud transmits the living memory of enslavement across time and place in the work of **Dineo Seshee Bopape** (born 1981, Polokwane, South Africa; lives in Johannesburg, South Africa). Her recent immersive installation, *Master Harmoniser (Ile aya, moya, la, ndokh)* is an animated video and sound environment made with soil and water collected from places that played important historical roles in the transatlantic slave trade. Similarly, in *Swamp Fat* (2021), **Candice Lin** (born 1979, Concord, Massachusetts; lives in Los Angeles, California) plumbs mud as a physical archive that traces histories of race and citizenship. Utilizing clay harvested from nearby Saint Malo, the site of an early Asian American community in the bayou of Louisiana also previously inhabited by enslaved maroons and Indigenous people, Lin's work memorializes the history of a place threatened by climate change and remembers the transgressive possibilities of the swamp as a place of fluidity and fugitivity.

Sasha Wortzel (born 1983, Fort Myers, Florida; lives in Brooklyn, New York) animates the queer ecology of the swamp through the entangled social and environmental histories of South Florida where she grew up. Wortzel activates overlapping trajectories of desire, loss, and renewal, disrupting hierarchies of value associated with mud. So too does **Diedrick Brackens** (born 1989, Mexia, Texas; lives in Los Angeles, California) in his textiles, which integrate racial histories of the American South with his own personal mythology, reclaiming the catfish, a mud-dwelling, bottom-feeding creature, as a vessel of transcendence for the Black queer body.

Palpable across the works, mud becomes an agent of time and transformation, a medium of decomposition and creation. As such, *Thick as Mud* tracks the afterlives of violence against people and the environment while also evoking the potential for regeneration.

Thick as Mud is organized by Nina Bozicnik, Curator. Lead support for this exhibition is provided by generous gifts from David and Catherine Eaton Skinner and William True.

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