



Joiri Minaya. Container #4, 2020

The Immigrant Artist Biennial 2023: Contact Zone

Excavated Selves: Becoming Magic Bodies

Artists: AYDO (A young Jusine Yu & Nicholas Oh), Selva Aparicio, Felipe Baeza, Ala Dehghan, Dominique Duroseau, Mia Enell, Raul De Lara, Joiri Minaya, Lilian Shetereva, Francesco Simeti, Nyugen E. Smith, Maya Hayuk, and Ala Dehghan

Curated by Bianca Abdi-Boragi, Katherine Adams, and Anna Mikaela Ekstrand

November 30, 2023 - January 14, 2024

Opening Reception November 30, 6-8PM

Biennial Closing Party January 14, 3-6PM

Alchemy Gallery

55 Delancey St,
New York, NY 10002



Excavated Selves: Becoming Magic Bodies explores resilient and supernatural bodies as proxy *personae* for survival. Specific geographies, heritages, and cultures are rarely noted. Instead, artists use surrealism, science fiction, and mythopoesis as stages for rebellion. Through abstract forms, heroines drawn from memory, and anthropomorphism of the environment, featured artists anchor themselves within new or existing contexts. Departing from real places, their reference points may remain recognizable but are created anew through metamorphosis.

Works by artists Ala Dehgan and Felipe Baeza exemplify the supernatural body, as their respective drawings mix human and vegetal forms to create powerful characters that toe the line between poetic and sinister. The figure in Lilian Shetreva's work "Samovila" floats. Traditionally, Shetreva is a Slavic pagan goddess—the immortal keeper of holy nature, she asks us to revere plant and animal life. She commands the elements of wind, rain, floods and avalanches, and may use these forces in retaliation against those who destroy or harm her beloved land and the creatures residing within it. Re-enacting ancestral traditions, "Mourning Ritual" by artist duo AYDO (A young Yu & Nicholas Oh) reconfigures a traditional ceremonial garment. This garment was passed down generationally by the women in Yu's family as a sacred object. AYDO's performance-based film shot at the Korean Demilitarized Zone activates the garment and explores personal and collective loss. Spanish artist Selva Aparicio's work centers death by drawing on tradition and ancient practices, with an installation that incorporates oyster shells. Aparicio's piece highlights the oyster as a host that continues to regenerate the ocean bed even after death.

In works that counteract the exoticization of the female Caribbean body, Dominican artist Joiiri Minaya's "Containers"—an ongoing series of performative photographs and a video—utilize graphic natural prints that represent Caribbean and tropical environments. Her models wear full-body suits in these prints as they lounge in suggestive poses in parks and other landscaped environments. Nyugen E. Smith's collage "Bundlehouse Borderlines No.9 (Liberator No.1)" creates a map, his mixed media works present diasporic soils that act to destabilize borders. Investigating social constructs around race, Tariku Shiferaw's signature paintings feature horizontal lines of gradient brown tones, operating between abstraction and figuration. Natural elements appear in artist Francesco Simeti's "Corniculata" which resembles seaweed or an with a balance of robustness and fragility, almost breathing. Simeti's works in clay combine references to baroque and rococo forms with a mastery of contemporary ceramics.

The exhibition includes new works by two featured artists: a sound work by Dominique Duroseau whose practice explores the black body and Raul De Lara whose wood sculptures often reference cacti, flora, and fauna from the Texas-Mexico border terrain.

Excavated Selves: Becoming Magic Bodies is part of The Immigrant Artist Biennial 2023: Contact Zone held across venues in New York and New Jersey from September 2023 to January 2024. [Find the full program here.](#)

The Immigrant Artist Biennial 2023: *Contact Zone*
Excavated Selves: Becoming Magic Bodies at Alchemy Gallery
Press Release



HOST PARTNER

Alchemy is a process of creation and transformation; the evolution of turning the ordinary into the extraordinary. **Alchemy Gallery**'s mission is to celebrate that process artistically, by fostering the development of artists at all levels, in all mediums, and championing their art with the right audiences of quality collectors. The Gallery's 1000sq. ft footprint in New York's Lower East Side gives art the room it needs to breathe and provides the optimal environment for collectors to discover, explore and acquire.

ORGANIZER

The Immigrant Artist Biennial presents immigrant artists through various formats, facilitating a platform of support for projects by often overlooked and silenced voices. Founded in 2020 by its artistic director Ukrainian-born, NYC-based artist Katya Grokhovsky TIAB is fiscally sponsored by New York Foundation for the Arts and funded through its host partners, grants, sponsorships, donations, and its Patron Circle.

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