

MONYA ROWE GALLERY

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For Immediate Release

LARISSA BATES

Absent Friends

April 8 – May 14, 2022

Opening reception: Friday, April 8, 6-8 PM

Monya Rowe Gallery is excited to announce a solo exhibition of paintings by **Larissa Bates** titled *Absent Friends*. The opening reception for the artist will be held on Friday, April 8, 6-8 PM.

There is a psychological concept of the mind being divided into the experiencing self and the remembering self. Bates' paintings explore this concept by capturing the complexity of changed and evolving relationships with family and friends. The works depict real and imagined situations with loved ones ranging from interiors to landscapes, bridging places between Central America and the United States, extending from childhood to adulthood.

The settings are reflective of a blending of cultures, with plants and aesthetics from the artists' Costa Rican heritage intertwined with tea settings from her American grandmother. The amalgamation of visual qualities from these two cultures is a hallmark of the work, referencing the way Asian decorative arts were imitated by indigenous and Spanish colonial artists in New Spain centuries ago, resulting in a new hybrid visual language. The artist lived as a child in Costa Rica before being raised in Vermont by her father. Interweaving the personal and the political, Bates' paintings also address pre-conceived notions of masculinity and parental expectations based on gender. Men are portrayed as both masculine figures and nurturing care-givers. They are depicted as builders moving large rocks, while also carrying babies in harnesses. Another frequent motif in Bates' work are male wrestlers, which are used to symbolize tenderness and affection.

Bates' baroque interiors are inspired by a multitude of sources ranging from the decorative arts, textile designs of Joseph Frank, patterns from the Gorham Silver company, and Biombo screens painted in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. In *Tea* (2021-2022), two young men are served tea in a chintz-filled room. "These objects reflect the space of cultural hybridity that my paintings grapple with. I use this language of hybridity to look at the complexity of my families' Spanish and American roots in Costa Rica", the artist says. Bates' family played a dichotomous role in Costa Rica, as parts were involved with social justice work while others were part of the notorious United Fruit Company. Bates' idiosyncratic characters and strange sense of place are inspired by the Spanish surrealist painter Remedios Varo (1908-1963), Maria Izquierdo (1902-1955), Paula Rego (1935-), the drawings of Paul Cadmus (1904-1999), and the Danish illustrator, Kay Nielson (1886-1957).

In *To Absent Friends* (2021-2022) a seemingly joyful gathering of friends and family is also wrought with loss and a confused sense of identity. Bates' figures are depicted with elongated arms, suggesting a desire to connect to the past and to lost loved ones, while also symbolizing the emotional and geographical distance that can hinder personal relationships. The loss of her Costa Rican mother at a young age meant that the direct conduit to that part of her history was also lost. The paintings serve as a way to grapple with the questions surrounding family, both chosen and born, and the ways we care for one another.

There is a strong sense of longing in Bates' paintings. An emotional resonance is instilled as she creates paintings that respond to her experiences from growing up in the U.S and her maternal roots in Costa Rica. However, the personal themes explored are universal. As the artist says: "It's a love letter to the poignancy of how fleeting but meaningful the connections run in our lives. How much people change us and touch us in whatever capacity or time we have with them. How they live on within, how we hold those memories."

Larissa Bates (b. 1981, Burlington, Vermont) received a BA from *Hampshire College*, MA. Recent group exhibitions include *Taymour Grahne*, London and *Monya Rowe Gallery*, NY. Upcoming group exhibitions include "Gilded: Contemporary Artists Explore Value and Worth" at the *Weatherspoon Art Museum*, Greensboro, NC. Bates is an *Artadia Awardee*. Her work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Artforum*, among many others. Bates lives and works in Hastings-on-Hudson, NY and is represented by *Monya Rowe Gallery*, NY.

Gallery hours

Tuesday – Saturday, 12 – 6 PM

For more information or images please contact the gallery at info@monyarowegallery.com

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