

ABATTOIR

New Narratives

Opening November 4th, 6–8pm

[Herman Aguirre](#), [Katie Butler](#), [Max Markwald](#), [Erykah Townsend](#), [Omar Velázquez](#), [Antwoine Washington](#)

On view through December 30th, 2021

New Narratives comprises paintings by six young artists, four working in the Cleveland area, two based in Chicago with connection to Mexico and Puerto Rico. The show highlights painters who work in a representational style, developing this idiom in service of narratives of deep importance to each artist. The grouping includes Cleveland area artists who address specific social concerns—**Antwoine Washington** depicts the Black family, focusing on positive images of fatherhood. **Max Markwald's** self-portraits reflect his transition to the male body and identity. **Erykah Townsend** continues her exploration of pop culture cartoon figures, personal reflections of her childhood influences. **Katie Butler's** still life paintings revive this classical form with pointed allegories of recent American politics and critical commentary on power. They are joined by **Herman Aguirre**, a Mexican-American artist in Chicago, whose heavy impasto oils depict memorials to victims of violence in Mexico and his Chicago neighborhood. Finally, **Omar Velazquez**, who works in Puerto Rico and Chicago, employs a vibrant palette and magical sense of light in his paintings of the natural world, which read both as exquisite allegorical folktales and contemporary social critique.

Herman Aguirre

These paintings are visual representations of traumatic events that affect the artist, his family and community. The subjects explored are deep-rooted in Mexico's war on drugs and Chicago's inner-city violence. Whether personal or public, these events continue to insert themselves in our conversations, plague our neighborhoods, and leave an irreversible effect on our people. As a result, the remnants and memories are present throughout our surroundings, constantly reminding us of the lives taken and the families destroyed.

Katie Butler

Calling upon the tradition of still life painting, this body of work uses food and domestic settings to subtly address contemporary political issues. These unsettling *tablescapes* subvert the technical norms of the still life genre in the 17th century to question the current power dynamics at play in American

politics. Moments away from being gutted, filleted, and consumed, fish and crustaceans stare at the viewer with anxious eyes. These paintings question who the feast is for, and who is paying the tab.

Max Markwald

In September of 2018, I legally changed my name to Max (he/him/his) and began using large-scale realistic portraiture to document my gender transition. I hear a lot of comments that people expect to see more emotional struggle in my work, which always strikes me as funny. Although realizing I was trans was a bit confusing and awkward, everything after that has been life-saving. For me, the struggle associated with the trans experience hasn't come from inner turmoil; it's come from living in a society that doesn't recognize my existence; it's come from being denied healthcare, threatened my job, and harassed in public. I hope in ten-twenty years, people view my work without anticipating pain and instead question why there had to be so much.

Erykah Townsend

In this work, I considered the horror aspect of pop culture. I *Frankensteined* two films to create one narrative, combining the horror film *Carrie* with Michael Jackson's *Thriller* in a single frame. This draws each character to their original subjects, but seen in another light. Carrie's shower scene and the ending of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* are both iconic, expressing controversial narratives. This painting depicts negative experiences of young women when they hit puberty. The witch is a play on how women are seen as evil when they are on their cycle, as well as the history of witches. Michael Jackson's glare represents the eyes of society; anticipating later events of being sexualized as a woman.

Omar Velazquez

Omar Velázquez divides his time between Ponce, Puerto Rico and Chicago. He paints landscapes of the island with close observation of the flora and fauna, along with evidence of humankind's encroaching on magical scenes. His closely observed birds in lush environments also reference colonialism and the experience of the Puerto Rican diaspora. Memory and dream suffuse these scenes with surreal light, bringing the artist's experiences of wandering the countryside to the fore.

Antwoine Washington

Celebrate the wins with the ones you love.

The work investigates the meaning of black luxury, with influences from hip hop music videos. The celebration of success and how moments spent with loved ones become the true value. Sharing stories of love, success, marriage, family and experiences. By encouraging this shift in perspective, I want to show that the real value isn't in the purchase of the materials but in the moments created from the experiences shared.

