

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Simonette Quamina
Canboulay

September 25 - October 31, 2021

Opening Reception: Sat. September 25, 4-7PM

Artist-led Tours: Sat. October 9, 3-4:30PM

Closing Reception: Sun. October 31, 12-6PM



Simonette Quamina, *Confirmation in Victoria's Regia*, 2018. Graphite, monograph on Kitakata paper, dry mounted on cotton paper, 36 x 72 inches.

Simonette Quamina's practice is rooted in the intersection between family, agricultural histories, and sociopolitical events that have shaped global migration and labor. Growing up between Canada, Guyana, St. Vincent, and the United States, the artist explores ideas of belonging through intimate scenes from her family's history in natural settings and domestic interiors. The title *Canboulay* refers to the Caribbean celebration stemming from the Trinidad slave rebellion, as well as the burning of sugarcane fields. The term comes from the French *canne brulee*, meaning "burnt cane." Sugarcane fields were periodically burnt as a form of pesticide maintenance, the offshoot of which produces a fine, black pollutant known locally as "black snow."

For this exhibition, Quamina accesses the joyous aspects of *Canboulay* through the dark recesses of the celebration's history. She combines art historical imagery from Millais' melancholic *Ophelia* with family stories and connects legacies of sugar production in the Caribbean to its role in sustaining slavery in the region. The narrative in this series picks up from another recent work entitled *dutty tuff: omens of things to come* (2021) depicting her grandfather laboring in the brush of sugarcane fields in Guyana as a child. In this piece, the young figure tugs at the sugarcane reeds, as if attempting to physically remove the crop's connection to systemic exploitation.

Each large work in the exhibition is an immersive wall-sized visual horizon. The series borrows the methodological framework of a caesura, which describes a break in a poem. In an intrinsic relationship to writing, the break separates elements of the stories into the vignettes of the individual works. The artist's use of the break also exists within each work, through the cuts, rips, and abstracted layers that collage the paper into whole scenes. Quamina collapses the socioeconomic ramifications of sugarcane, familial subjugation, and material histories into the complex, dark surfaces of the works. She uses a sophisticated variety of collage and printmaking techniques, including woodcut, collograph, embossed print, China Colle and silk aquatint—a process where the artist layers mesh and acrylic in order to hold the ink. Her works employ graphite for drawing as well as the base for her printmaking inks, using the material's full spectrum of saturation and reflective qualities, producing rich, nuanced spaces.

S m a c k M e l l o n

Bio:

Simonette Quamina was born in Ontario Canada, and spent her early childhood living between South America, the Caribbean, and New York City. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from the City College of New York and a Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking from the Rhode Island School of Design. She is the recipient of the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Studio Program in New York City, the recipient of the 2017-2018 Provincetown Fine Arts Works Center Residency and the 2017 Salem Art Works Fellowship as well as a current 2020 Queen Sonja Print Award nominee. Her work has shown both nationally and internationally. It has been acquired for private and public collections, including the Fleet Library's special collections. Her recent group exhibitions include *Embody* at The Mandeville Gallery, *Figuring the Floral* at Wave Hill Glyndor Gallery, *Artist I steal from* at Gallerie Thaddaeus Ropac in London, *Coded* at the Boston Center of the Arts, Mills Gallery, and *Bathing* at Planthouse Gallery in New York City. She maintains an active studio in New York City and is an Assistant Professor of Printmaking at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

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