

rachel uffner



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All That Glitters

Maria Berrio, Derek Fordjour, Ebony G. Patterson

June 29 – August 2, 2017

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 29, 6 – 8 pm

Rachel Uffner Gallery presents *All That Glitters*, a three-person show with work by Maria Berrio, Derek Fordjour, and Ebony G. Patterson. Each artist brings a unique global perspective to their art making, which questions notions of individual and collective identities that lie beneath seductive surfaces.

Women are central to Maria Berrio's magical-realist dreamscapes. Born in Bogotá, Colombia, Berrio spent her childhood on her family's mountainside farm, then moved to New York at the age of eighteen. The South American folklore and mythology integral to her formative years, along with lingering memories of an intense connection to nature, inform her large, meticulous mixed-media canvases. Berrio's goddesses of the natural world, each carefully crafted with multitudinous, lush layers of Japanese rice paper, appear to determine their own surreal surroundings. To Berrio, this alliance with nature symbolizes a potential that is frequently untapped in the modern world; her subject's powerful womanhood, allied with the creatures of the earth, is a strength that must not be forgotten.

The representational, multi-media sculptures and works on paper of Derek Fordjour, born in Memphis, Tennessee to parents of Ghanaian heritage, explore the human experience of fragility, and how we express agency over societal demands of strength. Using athletes as subjects for these conversations about the vulnerability of those deemed heroic, Fordjour creates sculptural totem poles of terra cotta and coal men wearing antiquated sports gear, which, in their seemingly inherent structural instability, speak to the tenuous nature of power. It feels as if these stacked sculptures could topple with the slightest touch. Both in space and on paper, Fordjour's portraits are reduced simply to race, gender, and uniform, stripping his subjects of individuality, and creating identity through numbers and teams, while simultaneously implicating the viewer in the profiling process.

Jamaica-born Ebony G. Patterson challenges who holds the power to determine and frame a life as "of value." In her *when they grow up* series, Patterson creates collage and installation-based portraits of children in adolescence, which function both as memorial to the deceased and shrine to martyred saints. Appalled by the way in which child victims of color are treated with a lack of empathy, dismissed, and even implicated by society and the media as the cause of their own deaths, Patterson reclaims the humanity of her subjects while reminding the viewer of their innocence. Surrounding her portraits with purposefully overemphasized tokens of childhood, Patterson examines the tenuous relationship between race and age when converged with public perceptions of innocence and guilt, or blame. Using post-production to enhance their rosy glows, Patterson recasts her subjects as cherubs, who through their glitter remain precious as gold.

Image: Ebony G. Patterson, *18 (...when they grow up...)*, 2016. Mixed media on hand-cut paper with beads, appliques, embellishments, broaches, plastic, glitter, fabric, toys. 72 x 48 in (182.9 x 121.9 cm).

Rachel Uffner Gallery
170 Suffolk Street
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064
info@racheluffnergallery.com
racheluffnergallery.com

Please call (212) 274-0064 or email info@racheluffnergallery.com for more information