

BOSSE & BAUM

Jade de Montserrat: *In Defence of Our Lives*

Preview: Saturday 1 June, 4pm - 6pm

31 May – 15 June 2024

Bosse & Baum, London

"My work is driven by a necessity to understand my body's positioning within histories and legacies of cultural and social inequalities," de Montserrat asserts, "I aim to expose gaps in our visual and linguistic habits, inviting dialogue and reflection on the vulnerabilities and resilience of bodies." - Jade de Montserrat

Bosse & Baum presents Jade de Montserrat's second solo exhibition at the gallery, *In Defence of Our Lives*, bringing together works on paper that combine text and fractured images of bodies to voice experiences of exploitation and violation. Unapologetic yet vulnerable, the show interrogates issues of reproductive justice, race and trauma, and relates to plights for liberation through small works and large-scale works on paper, the latter of which form the unfinished Cobalt Folio.

In some of de Montserrat's smaller works, sections of faces and bodies are framed by excerpts of text. They include the eyes of Tarana Burke in the work titled *All, everything, representation*, the founder of the Me Too movement, a prominent survivor and activist for racial, economic and gender equality. It speaks to the theme of reproductive justice that permeates the body of work in the exhibition. The artist attempts to bear witness and make sense of injustices, using drawing to humanise and give voice to those who have faced oppression. The title of the three works in the triptych *Quiet as it's kept* comes from Toni Morrison's novel titled 'The Bluest Eye' (1970). Set in 1941, it tells the story of a young African-American girl named Pecola who struggles with whiteness and experiences sexual violence. The repetition de Montserrat makes of this and other phrases in her work speaks to a constant internal repetitive echo, the barrage of intrusive thoughts that are part and parcel of living with the trauma resulting from abuse, living with cPTSD, and neurodivergence. The idea of repetition of works and text in the show also speaks to de Montserrat's performance and live art, which remains extant, incomplete, in process, as is the fact of healing.

This leads to the exhibition's eponymous work, *In Defence of Our Lives*, a work on paper in de Montserrat's distinct style wherein text is overlaid against the colours of the Palestinian flag in the background, reflecting the artist's belief that "you can't think about trauma, reproductive rights, genocide and other injustices without thinking about Palestine". The message is anti-imperialist and in solidarity with Palestine and Palestinians and by extension, people of Sudan, Congo, Haiti, and all oppressed peoples worldwide. The text is reproduced in a large work on paper, making reference to multiple liberation struggles, and shown alongside a series of other monumental folios in the gallery space. Repetition is again at play here but with scale between the leaves or pages from the oversized book, the Cobalt Folio, and the smaller works in the exhibition.

The exhibited works stem from the artist's experiments with collage, handmade books, original photographs, and performance-to-camera, evolving into vocal yet delicate paintings on paper. These pieces address the viewer directly, using text as a device to simultaneously affirm individual presence and question the individual's role within the collective. By mirroring the selfie generation's fixation on self-representation, de Montserrat's works question our agency, political freedom and responsibility as global participants on a worldwide stage. These works on paper form a part of de Montserrat's practice, which employs mediums such as painting, performance, film, sculpture, installation, print, and text to interrogate and challenge visual and linguistic structures. Powerful and visceral, her practice embodies shared and personal histories, particularly examining the cultural and theoretical legacies of chattel slavery and migrations within the context of Black Atlantic cultural studies.

All proceeds from the sale of the artwork titled *In Defence of Our Lives* will be donated to Medical Aid for Palestinians, supporting the cause that inspires much of de Montserrat's work.

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Events :

Friday 31 May, 4pm at Richard Saltoun Gallery : In-conversation with Erin Manning and Jade de Montserrat, moderated by Phoebe Osborne

Saturday 1 June, 2pm : Artist-led walk from Richard Saltoun Gallery to Bosse & Baum

Saturday 1 June, 6pm at Bosse & Baum : In-conversation with Erin Manning and Jade de Montserrat, moderated by Phoebe Osborne

For more information and to book please visit the gallery's website.

About the artist :

Dr. Jade de Montserrat was the recipient of the Stuart Hall Foundation Scholarship supporting her PhD and the development of her work from her Black Diasporic perspective in the North of England. de Montserrat works through performance, drawing, painting, film, installation, sculpture, print and text. In 2020, Iniva and Manchester Art Gallery commissioned her as the first artist for the Future Collect project, with a solo exhibition *Constellations: Care and Resistance* at Manchester Art Gallery (2020 – 2022). In 2021, she participated in a group exhibition *An Infinity of Traces* at Lisson Gallery, and opened a solo exhibition *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* at Bosse & Baum Gallery, London. In 2022, she was included in the group exhibition *Body Vessel Clay*, at Two Temple Place, London, and York Art Gallery (2022), and *A Tall Order! – Rochdale Art Gallery in the 1980s*, at Touchstones, Rochdale (2023). Most recently she had a solo exhibition titled *Soul of Fire*, Old Parcels Office Artspace, Scarborough (2023). In 2023 the artist co-launched Soul of Fire Artists' Charcoal to make the material accessible to schools and communities. de Montserrat will be launching Cracks in the Curriculum 5 with Serpentine Education and also participating in *Towards New Worlds* at MIMA, Middlesbrough later in 2024. Jade de Montserrat is a Tutor at Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, and an Associate Lecturer at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts, London.