

Bockley Gallery



Announcing *Variations on a Sun Star*, Lela Pierce's First Exhibition at Bockley Gallery

Reception: June 10, 2022 from 5 to 7 pm

Exhibition: May 6 through June 18, 2022

Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 5pm

Masks are requested

For her first exhibition at Bockley Gallery, Lela Pierce turns the gallery's traditionally white space jet black in an immersive installation that explores transformation and threads of her own spiritual interests and ethnic heritage. For *Variations on a Sun Star*, the artist pierces the blackness with radiantly hued works across media, from neon-and-white paintings on black paper to riotously colored sculptures to textile pillows.

"The world we live in is between those two, the darkness that's deep in the earth and the vastness of outer space," she says, "and then there's this colorful life that we're living in."

Pierce's large-scale works on paper combine iconography from her African American father's lineage and her mother's European ancestry—from the West African concept of Sankofa, often rendered as a bird looking back over its shoulder, which refers to going back to retrieve that which is at risk of being lost, to imagery of *psyanky*, often referred to as a "Ukrainian egg," from her mother's Lemko and Rusyn forebears. In pre-Christian times, these eggs were often inscribed with adorations to a sun god, which is the spark for Pierce's investigation. She notes a corollary between this egg imagery and the human body: each work is roughly torso-shaped. "I'm thinking about the way the geometry of transformation and stars sits in the body," she says. Also infused in the work are influences from Pierce's studies in India: over seven years, she returned repeatedly to study yoga meditation, Madhubani painting (with Manisha Jha) and classical Indian dance (Odissi).

It all fuels a decolonial art practice, she says: "The purpose of art for me right now is this persistent practice of imagining transformation. A persistent practice of imagining transformation

is vital for seekers of freedom. Because when you're stuck, you're not going to move. And I think places where that happens is where oppression sits and doesn't move. That's where slavery is. If you can't imagine things to be different, the systems remain."

About Lela Pierce

Born and raised in rural Minnesota, Pierce is a painter, performer, and installation artist. She holds a BA, with honors, in studio art from Macalester College and will complete her MFA at the University of Minnesota in August 2022. Her work has been presented internationally in both Sweden and India as well as several Twin Cities venues. Recipient of a 2018 Jerome Emerging Artist Fellowship, Pierce is an independent performance artist and has danced with Rosy Simas Danse and Ananya Chatterjea's Ananya Dance Theatre.

About Bockley Gallery

Founded in 1984, Bockley Gallery represents artists from across Minnesota and North America, including Andrea Carlson, Pao Houa Her, Postcommodity, Dyani White Hawk, and the estates of Jim Denomie and George Morrison. Its space since 2005, in Minneapolis's Kenwood neighborhood, offers an intimate experience with art, while its outreach programs to local, national, and international museums and biennials expands the dialogue around what it believes to be the most relevant ideas in art today.

Media Inquiries

For further information, please contact Bockley Gallery