

Bockley Gallery

Together: Leslie Smith III & Dyani White Hawk

Exhibition: September 20 to November 2, 2024

Artist conversation: 5 to 6 PM; public reception: 6 to 8 PM Friday, September 20, 2024

Bockley Gallery is pleased to celebrate its 40th anniversary with *Together: Leslie Smith III & Dyani White Hawk*.

This dynamic exhibition impresses a conversation within and between the artists' respective and overlapping commitments to relationality, narrative, and the pictorial as part of the complex histories and futures of abstraction. New and recent two and three dimensional works – from Smith's multiform attunements to White Hawk's geometric honorings – draw attention to surface, structure, and the materiality of objects while emboldening a rigorous love for the practice and potentials of painting that first instigated the artist's friendship over a decade ago.

For Leslie Smith III, expanding notions of Black representation arise from analyzing intimate interactions within his given and chosen family as well as broader, shifting social-cultural and political identities. *Together* features five paintings by Smith that acknowledge the fortification of daily ritual during uncertain times of pandemic and uprising. Entrusting the unfolding process of critical improvisation, the shape he gives to a paintings' supports serves as a gesture that inspires the works' subsequent becoming. Smith speaks of atmosphere, void, and illusionistic space as much as subtle intricacies of paint, color, brushstroke, mark making, and collage. The exhibition's namesake painting carries deep, intentional green and blacks of widely differential application per its multipart surface. Like *One Silly While* and *Still Blue*, *Together* contains purposeful tension in its unlikeliness, including a trace of felt. *Now What?* and *Outside the Ears of Others* (all 2022) also employ felt as a juxtaposing support that sets the rigidity of weave-weft order into relation with the randomness of felted wool fibers.

For Dyani White Hawk, honoring and innovating inherited Lakota forms and knowledge is a practice that forges intersectionality and Native inclusion within modern and contemporary art histories and futures. *Together* features two paintings with *kapemni* - a triangulated hourglass shape visualizing Lakota earth-sky mirroring and way of life. While *kapemni* is succinctly doubled in the quiet, duochrome *Reflection IV* (2023), it takes on panoramic rhythm in *Walk With Me* (2024): brushy, bright color fields and quill-like, black-on-black fine lines are united by a sparkling central band. Marking a new direction in White Hawk's sculptural practice are columnar forms clad in her signature hand-loomed glass beads on metallic underpainting. Created in homage to the legacies and totemic forms of Great Lakes region Anishinaabe artists George Morrison (Grand Portage Ojibwe, 1919-2000) and Jim Denomie (Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe, 1955-2022), the ten foot tall *Visiting* is titled after an intergenerational practice of togetherness and exchange across Native communities and tribes, such as in the works' becoming. Enacting a crazy quilt methodology, beaded strips uniquely designed and loomed by White Hawk's expansive studio community come together, vibrating as a cohesive, iridescent patchwork.

As Smith and White Hawk's relational aesthetic and conceptual lineages of abstraction commune in *Together*, they create a truly open invitation. White Hawk equates experiences with color and pattern as medicinal and healing, while Smith's sculpted canvases call audiences close to pause, stare and be with the uncontainable.

Leslie Smith III was born in 1985 in Silver Spring, Maryland, and is based in Madison, Wisconsin. He holds an MFA from the Yale University School of Art (2009) and BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art (2007). Recent solo exhibitions include *Reaching for Something High*, CHART Gallery, New York, NY (2023); *The Depth of Thoughts*, Galerie Isabelle Gounod, Paris, France (2022); *Stranger Days*, Maus Contemporary Gallery, Birmingham, AL (2022); and *The Passage*, Saint-Tugdual Chapel, as part of L'Art dans les Chapelles, Bretagne, France. Recent group exhibitions include *Moreover: 50 Paintings*, curated by Michelle Grabner, Green Gallery, Milwaukee, WI (2024), and *OFFSITE*, James Fuentes Gallery, New York, NY (2022). Smith's work is collected by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond, VA; Birmingham Museum of Art and Abroms-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts, Birmingham, AL; and FRAC, Auvergne, France, among others. Among numerous awards, he has received Fellowships from the Joan Mitchell Foundation (2022) and the American Academy in Rome (2009). Smith is a Professor of Art and Art Department Chair at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Dyani White Hawk (Sičáŋġu Lakota) was born in 1976 in Madison, Wisconsin, and is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She holds an MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2011) and BFA from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico (2008). Featured in the 2022 Whitney Biennial, followed by a permanent commission at the Whitney Museum of American Art, White Hawk's art has been the subject of numerous institutional solo shows, including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (2022), the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art (2022), and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art (2021). In 2025, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and Remai Modern, Saskatoon, will present the survey exhibition *Dyani White Hawk: Love Language*. Collections include the Aktá Lakota Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Denver Art Museum, Gochman Family Collection, Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. White Hawk is the recipient of generous recognitions and awards, most recently, the Guggenheim Fellowship and Creative Capital Grant (both 2024), and MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (2023).

Bockley Gallery is a contemporary art venue and curatorial practice based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Since its founding in 1984, the gallery has worked with artists living and working in Minnesota and the Great Lakes region, which led to a focus with Indigenous artists across Turtle Island/North America. While the gallery offers an intimate experience through a calendar of on-site programming, its broad collaborations expand the dialogue around what it celebrates as the most relevant ideas in art today. Gallery artists' recent highlighted institutional solo exhibitions across Turtle Island include at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Hammer Museum, ICA Miami, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Hessel Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and Remai Modern while recent group presentations include Sydney Biennale, SITE Santa Fe, National Portrait Gallery, Toronto Biennial of Art, Whitney Biennial, and Prospect 5 Triennial. Gallery artists are regularly honored through significant recognition including the Guggenheim Fellowship, Creative Capital Award, MacArthur Fellowship, Baloise Art Prize, Aperture Next Step Award, and many more. The gallery regularly places works in leading private and public collections such as the Walker Art Center, Whitney Museum of American Art, Metropolitan Museum of American Art, Forge Project Collection, National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and the Singapore Art Museum. Celebrating 40 years in 2024, Bockley Gallery recently launched a dynamic new website including an online publishing platform to center essays and voices of artists in conversation.

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