



la BEAST gallery is honored to present “Of the Muck,” a group exhibition of paintings and drawings by Los Angeles-based artists Abel Guzmán, Aydin Hamami, Higinio Martinez, Cody Molina, and David Nast Cole. The five artists, all in their 30s, are bound by an innate, unrestrained penchant for making. The works in this exhibition intuitively travel through spaces both figurative and abstract, offering guttural reactions to the carnal and divine. Juxtaposing various aesthetics and techniques, the curation prioritizes a search for meaning as inherent to the human condition.

“Of the Muck” opens with a reception on Saturday, March 25th, from 6-9 pm at la BEAST gallery in Cypress Park. The exhibition will be on view through April 29th, 2023.

About The Exhibition + The Artists

In his curatorial debut, la BEAST gallery co-founder Zachary Christensen draws inspiration from his own practice, displaying a selection of provocative works wrought with tension. The artists are connected by familial bonds as well as new friendships. Christensen and artist Cody Molina grew up together in Northeast Los Angeles, while Abel Guzmán hails from the Chicago area, Aydin Hamami from D.C., Higinio Martinez from New Mexico, and David Nast Cole from Boston. Though they arrived by varied journeys, the members of this cohort are deeply rooted in California, flocking to the richly creative community of Los Angeles. Aesthetically distinct yet thematically entangled, a shared quest for truth binds the artists to one another simply: those who know the glory of finding know that the search is not meant to end.

Although most of the exhibitors have undergone some formal training, their practices are heavily fortified by self-taught techniques. At first, the explosively colorful works present as fierce or even belligerent, but closer inspection reveals refined sensitivity at the core of every stroke. Art as a mechanism to confront raw emotions serves as a common thread throughout the exhibition. Featuring expressive mark-making and boldly intuitive compositions, much of the show centers around spontaneous sensations of spiritualism triggered by automatic processes. Philosophical truths are discovered through solitary inquiries of the material and contentious encounters with the unknown. The resulting artifacts of these experiences converge, producing something more akin to mythology than fact.

Recalling the primordial soup that spawned early life, “Of the Muck” is a monument to the disorder of the universe. Each artist taps into this raw energy as fuel for their investigations. Like a fallen tree becoming a nursery for complex ecosystems, the chaos of creation carries strands of elemental order. This is to say that one must feel around in the dark, even if it’s not apparent that what you find is merely a piece of the greater whole. “Of the Muck” represents a state of indivisible existence at the intersection of major questions like how life began and what happens when it ends. The artists capture glimpses of revelation at the edges of recognition. Acting as both scientist and cowboy, preacher and bullfighter, Guzmán, Hamami, Martinez, Molina, and Nast Cole probe the porous membrane separating the hum of traffic from the howling of wolves, seeking salvation from the gravity of loss that tethers all freedom of joy.