

LISA SETTE GALLERY



35 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

FALL / VOLUME 22

2019-2020

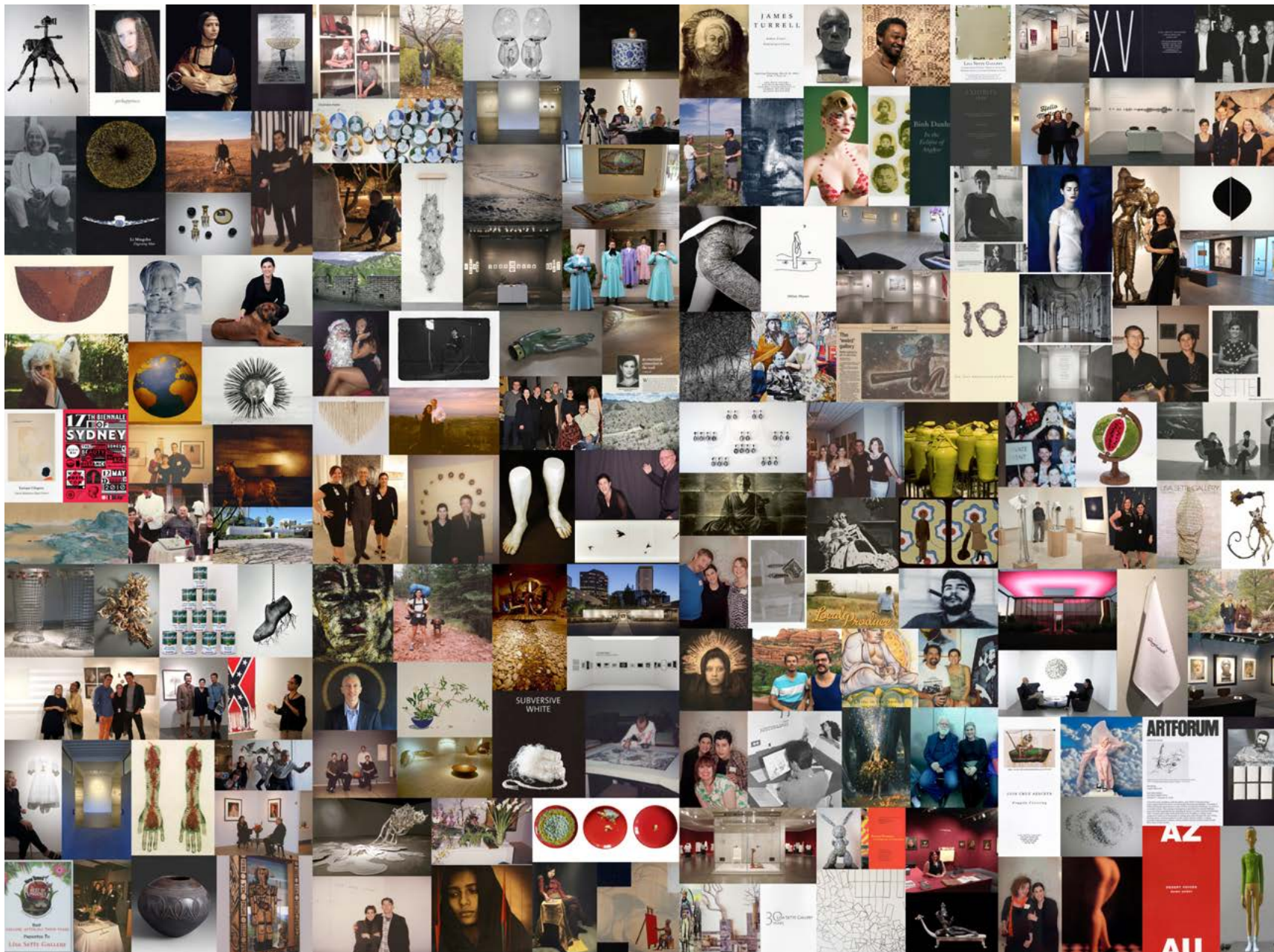
SERENITY NOW: MEDITATIONS ON HUMANITY 35 YEAR ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION

For 35 years Lisa Sette Gallery has engaged new and established artists in an unflinching examination of social and aesthetic issues. The gallery has maintained a radical and inclusive curatorial vision, recognized internationally for working with significant regional and international artists in diverse media, and exhibiting work that addresses urgent social and political issues. With *Serenity Now: Meditations on Humanity*, gallery founder Lisa Sette turns from the daily crush of division and conflict that threatens to indelibly shape our lived experience, and instead contemplates our human capacity for introspection and perseverance, and how these qualities endure regardless of external circumstances. “I do not want the current political climate and torment to define us,” remarks Sette. “I’d like to think about how we move through our current adversity.”

Serenity Now, which is both a gesture toward wholeness and a reference to an episode of *Seinfeld*, also celebrates the joy of human experience as it is embodied in our physical beings and in our attempts to navigate the challenges of our material world. Ultimately the project of selfhood and introspection is inextricably tied to our relationship to the world. “On a basic human level we are compassionate and tolerant,” says Lisa Sette. We exist in a state of being in relation to others.

Many of the artists included in *Serenity Now* question a range of figureheads and stereotypes that exist in a cosmic continuum; exploring the vast range of human identities and the irrationality of viewing the self as separate from others. From Buddhism to *Seinfeld*, our own painful and exquisite awareness of the people around us is what defines our individuality. This revelation is both the crux of our human struggles, and a cause for hope and joy.

Cover
David Kimball Anderson
Stillness, 2019, cast bronze, 11.5" x 49.5" x 21"



SIRI DEVI KHANDAVILLI

Siri Devi Khandavilli's recent installation, *Maya*, invites viewers to contemplate the ephemeral nature of perception with a series of mirrors in Rorschach-like forms. Self-regard is a recurring theme for the Bangalore-based sculptor and installation artist; in previous projects, Khandavilli presented burnished deities posed in pursuit of luxury goods and social media likes, basing her sly figurative sculptures on the idols adorning Hindu temples. The glistening forms of Khandavilli's inkblot-mirrors are similarly situated as objects of worship, and framed within exquisite resin padmapeeta, the lotus pedestal that is a common base for idols of worship in Indian iconography. Each sinuous, gleaming shape is of the artist's own devising: "They are all made in a moment in time and I don't control the shape; I try not to

choose. The way they come out, each marks that moment—the wind, the temperature, viscosity of ink, etc. All these factors align to form a shape that I am only the vehicle for."

In Khandavilli's project, each mirror reflects a different formulation of the self, and the endless experience of the mirrors' reflective loop approaches maya, "this great illusion of existence," as the act of being comprises a constant creation of meanings. Remarks Khandavilli, "This work is the culmination of my fascination with the materiality of mirrors, the ambiguity of perception and the elusive moment of a momentary realisation."

Siri Devi Khandavilli

Maya, 2018, resin, steel, 50 pieces, 14.5" diameter each



ATO RIBEIRO

Honoring the stories and peoples often neglected by history books, Ato Ribeiro's hand-worked wooden sculpture articulates a contemporary sense of cultural knowledge and hybridity. The artist remarks "My creative process stems from an urge to bridge my West African heritage with my African American identity in Western culture, as expressed by the Adinkra symbol of Sankofa, which directs us to return and retrieve that which may be valuable or forgotten."

Attention to material is primary to Ribeiro's practice; each piece is connected in a tangible way to its material origin, and he is able to maintain a connection to the stories of his surroundings. As Ribeiro considers his use of waste or scrap wood, he refers to the words of scholar Saidiya Hartman: "Waste is the interface of Life and Death. It incarnates all that has been rendered invisible, peripheral, or expendable to history writ large, that is, history as the tale of great men, empire and nation. Waste is the remnant of all the lives that are outside of history..."

Ribeiro's marquetted geometrical forms, fashioned entirely of found and discarded wood, explore the modes of communication embedded within traditional textiles such as Ghanaian Kente cloth and African American quilts. These intricate works present contemporary evidence of a shared heritage that is independent of words and has existed for centuries.

With an aim to preserve forgotten communities and cultures, and form alternate notions of home, Ribeiro's recent works are reflections of his time spent with griots—the traveling poets, musicians, and storytellers who preserve West Africa's oral traditions—as well as their U.S. counterparts, from those inhabiting the industrial workspaces of Detroit to the Red Willow People of the Taos Pueblo and beyond. Ribeiro collects individual histories and ultimately joins the fragments together to create objects that embody a timely new vocabulary of our cultural history, and suggest the burgeoning new world that it speaks of.

Ato Ribeiro

Main Race, 2019, repurposed wood, 47" x 71" x 1"





Left

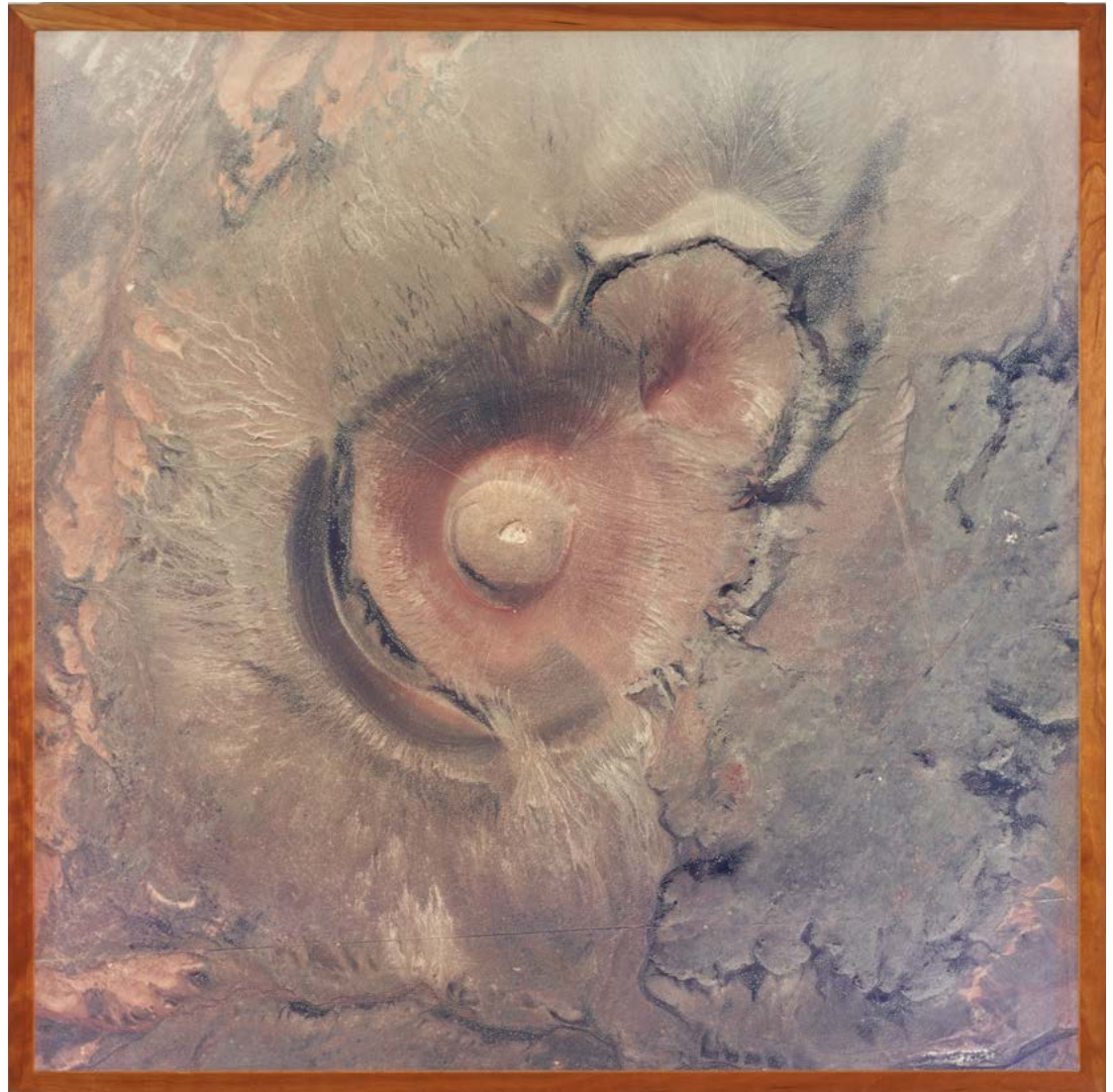
Binh Danh

Spiral Jetty, Utah (#5), 2017, unique Daguerreotype,
8" x 10" (13" x 14.75" framed)

Right

James Turrell

1st Aerial Survey with 10 Camera, 1983,
unique gelatin silver print, cherry frame,
46.5" x 46.5"





MNCANE NZUZA

It is difficult to conceive of two more disparate situations than a sophisticated, urban, contemporary art gallery in Phoenix, Arizona and a traditional compound of earthen structures literally at the end of the road in a remote corner of KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Surprisingly, however, these two contrasting interpretations of life on earth are closely linked by common, intrinsically human impulses; the creation and appreciation of art.

Mncane Nzuzza lives in a kraal—the ancient, traditional compound of round, earthen houses that includes a corral for chickens and a cow or two—all forming a rich domestic scene. She is 69 years old. Her grandmother was a potter who instructed Nzuzza as a child in the labor-intensive and matriarchal world of Zulu ceramics. Traditional potting is often a seasonal process: pots are made during the rainy season and fired during the dry season. Clay is dug—often at a considerable distance and always requiring much labor—then dried, pulverized, cleaned of stones and organic matter, hydrated, wedged to remove air, and finally hand-built (no potter's wheels) in a variety of forms. In the case of the Zulu, the clay is formed into blackened, rimless, bulbous pots.

Traditional Zulu pottery tenons into deep cultural pathways. Blackened earthenware vessels function as potent connectors between ancestors and the living. Most are made for either brewing or serving a mild beer which is communally consumed at important occasions and reinforces social connections. Zulu pottery is distinct from the incredibly varied world of traditional African ceramics. It is almost as if the fact of being

at the very southernmost tip of the continent determined a unique style—a style immediately accessible to 21st century contemporary Western aesthetics. Even though Zulu potters work within a traditional artistic canon of process, form and surface treatment, there is, nevertheless, considerable avenue for individual expression. In fact, distinguishing one's pottery is a primary vehicle for women to assert and increase prestige within Zulu society. Nzuzza's pots, which are remarkably accomplished both technically and aesthetically, are a testament to this dynamic.

Burnished, black, and rimless, Nzuzza's vessels seem to have been inflated from within, not laboriously built by slab and coil. The impossibly expanded forms of Nzuzza's vessels defy gravity—to anyone familiar with hand-building a pot, they are astonishing. The surface patterns of hundreds of tiny balls of clay, each individually applied, represent vestigial remnants of ancient skin scarification traditions. Nzuzza, however, takes this traditional surface treatment to a higher level. She uses no patterns, no measuring tools, but sits beside a vessel, rolling a tiny bit of clay in one hand and then attaching it to the pot—obviously 'seeing' the finished pot in her mind's eye as she works. When asked about how she works, how she determines the right pattern for the pot surface, or how she plans—she offers no explanations that would satisfy the Western interrogator. The whole creative process is an innate, direct response to material and process, and most importantly, to her prodigious skill.

The appreciation of Nzuzza's remarkable vessels by contemporary Western audiences taps several historic currents in Western art. The Arts and Craft movement of the late 19th, early 20th centuries created a vocabulary of appreciation for technique, material, and function.



Equally important is Minimalism, which formalized the appreciation of pure form, unencumbered by superfluous decoration. Color field painting opened eyes to perceiving depth and meaning in sheets of monochromatic surface. A Western interest in the Japanese concept of wabi-sabi, particularly in tea ceramics, fostered an appreciation of surface, understatement and honest use of material.

So what are we seeing in a vessel made by Nzuza? There is, of course, a conceptual foundation based on ancient Zulu traditions, which in most cases is unknown to contemporary Western viewers. What is remarkable is the ability of her pots to transcend that gap and still remain profoundly moving. We see simple, inflated forms—subtle, understated, yet incredibly dynamic—in a seemingly contradictory combination. These vessels don't terminate in defined "necks," but rather leave the opening ambiguous—an oculus defining space. Then, the surface: deep, coal-black, almost metallic, but with a patina of use implying other histories and other lives for the vessel. And then the small foot that often references the diameter of the opening. Again, like the opening, the foot is not announced but rather remains suggestive and utterly integral to the body above. Lastly, the surface treatment—interlocking loops, arcs, necklaces of hundreds of tiny clay nubs—never bombastic, always just right. This is Nzuza's genius.

– Douglas Dawson

Preceding page: **Mncane Nzuza**

Ukhamba, ceremonial beer-serving vessel, pit-fired hand-built earthenware, burnished surface, 10" x 16"

Left: *Ukhamba*, ceremonial beer-serving vessel, pit-fired hand-built earthenware, burnished surface, 14" x 17"

Right: *Ukhamba*, ceremonial beer-serving vessel, pit-fired hand-built earthenware, burnished surface, 12" x 25"



CARRIE MARILL

Carrie Marill's shining geometric fortifications encompass mysterious artifacts and alchemical processes at work. Marill's recent collection portrays walls and thresholds, in part as a means of protection necessary to get through a difficult year. In some of these works, delicate vining flora can be glimpsed within a burnished bronze enclosure: "I put up these patterned walls or shields so you can see the vulnerability from behind them, but they're protected within." Other paintings contain masonry-like surfaces, expressed in glistening lines with the exquisite clarity and pattern work that is a hallmark of Marill's endeavors. Enveloped within these "walls" is likely a hidden initial painting that is also a foundational, if undisclosed, part of her process.

The use of discrete strands of gold and bronze paint is a motif found throughout Marill's work, and in recent paintings metallic hues becomes a primary medium, symbolic of the artist's alchemical process: "I wanted to create a mosque or church-like space inside the gallery, all of the paintings glowing with patterning in gold or bronze, to create these almost sacred objects." For Marill, "pattern is my underlying visual language—it's always been there as part of the way I communicate, and it's ingrained in everything I do." The artist, who refers to a wide range of cultural influences, recently studied Moroccan patterning at a traditional painting school in the U.K. "The uses of color, space, pattern, and reduction in Middle Eastern and Asian painting have always interested me. There's a meditative sensibility that resonates with me and is something I try to integrate into my pieces. Ultimately, I see the world through a patterned lens - what I've learned is that much of the world sees through this lens as well."

Carrie Marill

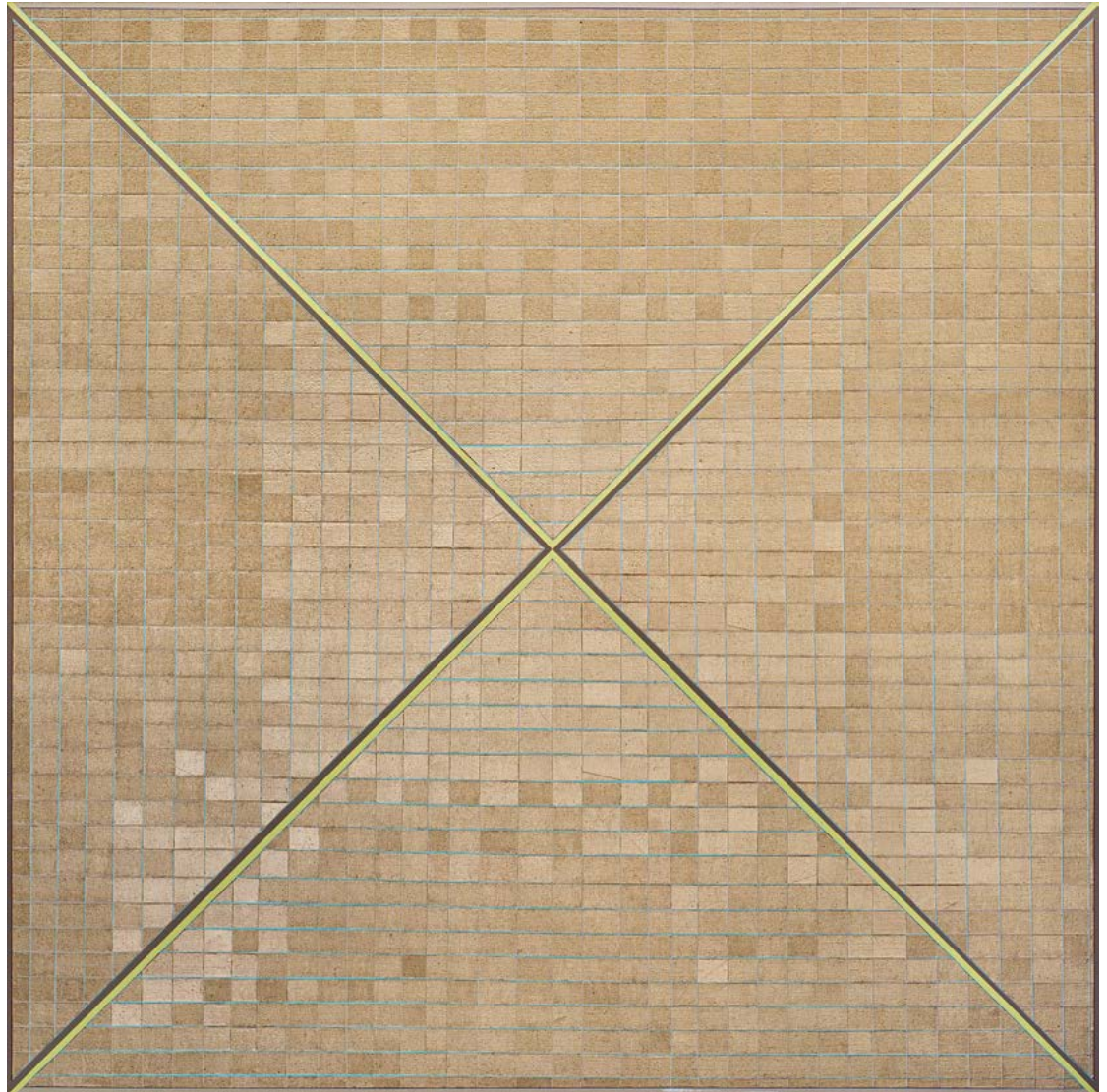
Profound Mystery Forever, 2019, acrylic on linen, 44" x 94"







Carrie Marill
Alchemy, 2019, acrylic on linen, 44" x 44"



Carrie Marill
Heart Shield, 2019, acrylic on linen, 44" x 44"



Enrique Chagoya

Aliens in Borderlandia, 2019, acrylic, water based oil, glass eyes, pencil, solvent transfers, decals, acrylic varnish, wood on handmade Amate paper, 11.5" x 108.5" (15.5" x 111.5" framed)





Ben Durham

(He) grew up, 2018, graphite text on handmade paper, hand-dug clay, steel chain link fence, 35" x 26" unframed, 39.75" x 30.75" framed



Angela Ellsworth

Pantaloncini: As Above, So Below

(33.487549–112.073994), 2019,

42,891 pearl corsage pins, colored dress pins,

fabric, steel, 26" x 26" x 13"



Luis González Palma
Mobius (Joven Alado - Winged Youth), 2019, digital
photograph on canvas, gold leaf, Judea Bitumen,
11.75" x 11.75" unframed (16" x 16" framed), edition 5



Luis González Palma

Mobius (Hablo con Labios de Silencio), 2019, digital
photograph on canvas, gold leaf, Judea Bitumen, 11.75"
x 11.75" unframed (17" x 17" framed), edition 5



Sonya Clark, *Octoroon*, 2018, canvas and thread, 83" x 38.25"

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE 2019/2020

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER, 2019	LUIS GONZÁLEZ PALMA: <i>POETIC ABSTRACTION</i>
NOVEMBER, 2019 – JANUARY, 2020	ZULU! CONTEMPORARY MASTER ZULU POTTER MNCANE NZUZA
JANUARY – FEBRUARY, 2020	CARRIE MARILL: <i>PROTECTED VULNERABILITY</i>
MARCH – APRIL, 2020	SERENITY NOW: <i>MEDITATIONS ON HUMANITY</i> 35 YEAR ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION
MAY – AUGUST, 2020	DAVID KROLL: <i>FRAGILE NATURE</i>

LISA SETTE GALLERY

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Hours: Tuesday-Friday: 10 am to 5 pm | Saturday: 12 to 5 pm | and by appointment

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Fourth of July

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Essays written by Megan Bates, except where noted. Design: ps:studios

