

FALSE FLAG

ALTERONCE GUMBY

Somewhere Under the Rainbow / The Sky is Blue and What am I

March 19 - April 25, 2021

FALSE FLAG and Charles Moffett are pleased to present *Somewhere Under the Rainbow / The Sky is Blue and What am I*, a dual-site exhibition of new work by Alteronce Gumby.

Gumby activates FALSE FLAG's vast Long Island City space by pushing the boundaries of scale. Its centerpiece will be a 24-foot-long canvas work (across six panels) in various shades of blue, engaging subjective perceptions of the night sky. A selection of gemstone-heavy works on panel, ranging from 12 x 12 inches to 53 x 70 inches, is on view at Charles Moffett's Canal Street space, taking advantage of the gallery's sun-drenched rooms to maximize the natural light interplay with Gumby's multi-faceted surfaces. Sixteen works are split between the exhibition's two sites.

Gumby's abstract visual language employs a range of carefully and deliberately chosen materials; he appropriates the genre's formal qualities while imbuing the work with themes and influences diametric to the reductive nature and prescribed forms of the midcentury canon. In Gumby's own words: "As a student of abstraction, I am fascinated with artists who constantly break the mold. Breaking the mold not only materially, like Jack Whitten and Mark Bradford, but even artists who break it compositionally. There's Ed Clark but also artists like Sam Gilliam, Ellsworth Kelly, Mary Heilmann, Elizabeth Murray, and Harvey Quaytman—all of whom work with shaped canvases. I've always wanted to engage with that history. Shaping your canvas is like building your own car: you get an appreciation and better understanding of what's happening, systematically." The show employs scale variance while pushing Gumby's longtime thematic considerations of how light, physics, natural energies and color can be contextualized into a larger societal conversation about race, as well as social considerations pertaining to the spiritual practices native to the locations from which he sources the gemstones featured in his work. These large, gemstone-filled, monochromatic works each contain distinct energies provided by their constituent gems and minerals.

Astrology and the cosmos are fundamental to not only Gumby's spirituality and worldview, but to the actual fabric of his compositions. When he is starting a new work, after his initial steps of determining what mood he wants to evoke; what his dominant painted-glass shard color should be; and what gemstones might most effectively conjure the right energy for the piece, Gumby first charges the stones in direct sunlight for several days to manifest their full energies, then lays them on the canvas or panel surface in the form of particular constellations. The constellations often correlate with his own sun, moon, and rising signs, but are sometimes simply dictated by his mood or the season. While the final compositions' constituent glass and

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stones might appear to be arbitrarily scattered, there are, in fact, multiple specific star sign constellations within the material arrangement. This tangible integration of celestial energy furthers the artist's overall examination of the universe's cosmic interrelatedness.

For this body of work, the gemstones sourced are lapis, ruby, amethyst, rose quartz, lemon quartz, fluorite, black tourmaline, and citrine. Each of the five Moonwalkers (a term Gumby uses to describe his signature zigzag-shaped panels, which he developed in 2017), on view at Charles Moffett, contains up to 40 raw, uncut gemstones, which Gumby integrates onto the panel with painted glass before sealing with acrylic. In general, even when Gumby produces works with painted finishes rather than granular, the paint itself contains ground-down gemstones that are conceptually considered in the same manner as those punctuating the granular works; this is the case with the 24-foot work at False Flag. Regarding the incorporation of painted glass across his works: one of Gumby's core materials is shards of glass panels that he paints before shattering. This practice and resulting integration represent cycles of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction.

On view from March 18 through April 25, 2021.

