

YI GALLERY



Karian Amaya
Shane Charles
Margrethe Aanestad

Looking North
Mar 18 – May 27, 2023

Yi Gallery is pleased to present *Looking North*, a three-person exhibition bringing together the work of Karian Amaya, Margrethe Aanestad and Shane Charles. An opening reception, with all three artists in attendance, will take place on Saturday, March 18, from 3 to 6 pm.

United by a process of abstraction and poetics, this group of work cherishes a look of open-endedness in composition, manifested through the textured surfaces and torn-looking raw edges—an absorbing dance of eventual humility. Wrapped in a fundamental simplicity, with the hugeness surrounding a circular motif, the sculptures, installation and canvases reflect an ascending energy. The three artists trace their artistic and personal roots back to the northern parts of their countries, or the hemisphere, geographically spanning Scandinavia, Northeast America and Mexico. Through utilizing raw, sourced, natural and industrial materials, the artists engage in themes of artifact, deterioration of landscape, generational divide, presence and continuity. Seen in its totality, the exhibition invites a renewed thinking of the “body in the landscape,” as well as the responsibility and representation within our personal and collective history in relation to the changing climate.

Karian Amaya’s practice revolves around the notion of encounter. Through sculpture and photography, Amaya investigates and questions the dialogue and resistance originating from matter, landscape and their social and territorial contexts. Deeply influenced by Land art and postminimalist movements, her work is rooted in the formal and narrative encounter of raw, natural and industrial materials. Originally from Chihuahua, Mexico, and daughter of a mining father, Amaya’s work reveals a direct reference to the extractivism of natural materials and the fragility of the landscape affected by human activity and the passage of time. Informed by her intimate relationship with the desert landscape and materials mined in Mexico, such as copper and marble, her sculptures become an abstraction of sunset, where the materials used to be, as a contemplative homage to the organic forms, the silence and the fragility of rocks in pressure and the omnipotent landscape of the desert. Amaya’s work reflects on the deterioration of landscape as a consequence of the exploitation of natural resources and the fluency of time manifested in this process. Interested in their materiality, the poetics they contain from their formation on earth and the processes that contain transformation for industrialization, Amaya explores the circumstances surrounding materials, such as copper and marble: “I usually work with fragments that were found or rescued from their end process, because they were destined to become waste of an aggressive industrialization of the land. My intrinsic narrative allows me to develop new meanings, trying to find beauty within the imperfect, flawed or unfinished, keeping the roots of their own place.”

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Shane Charles creates paintings, sculptures and photographs within a process of abstraction and poetics. Petroglyphs, mythology and natural cycles all inform his work. Charles utilizes raw-sourced material, body prints and open compositional spaces to engage with themes of artifact, presence and continuity. Charles is a direct descendent of the Penobscot Nation and is also of (colonial) British ancestry. His grandfather was a mapmaker and his father was the Penobscot tribal surveyor after the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980. From this lineage, Charles' narrative, which includes generational fracture and psychogeography, is one of place and remembrance. His making is a meditation on iconography and assemblage, while dichotomies play out of the intimate and monumental; the architectural and performative. Charles' recent works deal with memory, generational loss and renewal. His ongoing series, *Native Soil* (2015-present), commemorates his father's work as the Penobscot surveyor after the 1980 Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act. Hand-stitched hemp with soil from these lands, mixed with ash and paint, take the form of mapped terrain. In memory of his father, who passed on Memorial Day 2020, Smith has recomposed a work from this series. Incorporating pieces commissioned from Maine-based craftsmen to create the work for this exhibition, which also features "Brothers: Masks I and Mask II," reminiscent of death masks; these cast bronze works are both based on a face-impression by the artist, and, further, the conversation of passing. These works are joined by two color photographs taken by Charles and his then 4-year-old daughter, a record of the rare Blue Hunter's Moon present in the sky Halloween night 2020—as it is every 19-years in Metonic cycle. When the Blue Hunter's Moon occurs again, Charles' daughter will be 23 years old. This exhibition of works represents Charles' ongoing meditation on the "body in the landscape," as well as on responsibility and representation within the personal history of Charles' heritage.

In her work, **Margrethe Aanestad** aims to carry through a nerve—a personal and visceral presence—that allows the viewer an immediate entry into a space of deep contemplation: steadiness, silence and chaos. "It's about eliciting a sensation that opens up for presence." Through a ritualistic and meditative approach, Aanestad creates abstract drawings and paintings with the external expression of an inner attentiveness, plumbing the depths of herself and the shared human condition. Her rigorous and spare compositions vary from large scale pastel drawings to improvisational brush strokes on raw canvases. Often subtly referencing the landscape and celestial sphere, her work remains wholly non-representational, transcending physical realms while inviting perceptual encounters. A circular shape is present in several recent series. These seemingly precise circles in her work are achieved solely by hand. To Aanestad, this fundamentally basic circular motif serves both as an intense study of form and a compelling and universal symbol, suggesting unity, wholeness and infinity.

Karian Amaya (b.1986, Chihuahua, Mexico) currently lives and works in Guadalajara. The artist traces the origin of her deeply personal and quietly political work to her formative years in northern Mexico. At the heart of Amaya's practice, which spans drawing, photography and sculpture, is a profound concern for process and materials, with each series seeking a formal solution. Informed by minimalism, she explores issues related to language and the deterioration of the landscape. Karian Amaya holds a B.A. from the University of Guadalajara and studied mixed media at The Art Students League of New York. Her work has been exhibited in Mexico, the United States and Europe. In 2015, she participated in the New York Foundation for the Arts migrant artist mentoring program. In 2016, she was included in the Border Biennial at El Paso Museum of Art. Amaya has received numerous awards, including Stimuli for artistic creation PECDA (2013-2014), the Alfaro Siqueiros Scholarship (2017), the Grodman Legacy Scholarship, awarded by the UDG Foundation (2018), Proyecto traslados (2019), Contigo a la Distancia FONCA (2020), the HORIZONTES Jalisco Program (2020), State Council for Culture and the Arts CECA (2021-2022) and Stimulus for artistic creation PECDA CHIHUAHUA 2023 in the category of sculpture.

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Shane Charles (b. 1983, Maine, USA) has received significant support through commissions, collections, or solo exhibitions by museums and contemporary art institutions, including NARS Foundation, NYC (solo, 2022); Space Gallery, Portland, ME, with funding from the Andy Warhol Foundation (solo, 2022) and Re-Site public art (2020); the Goethe-Institut Boston (solo, 2021); the Center for Maine Contemporary Art (2020); the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (2019); Wassaic Project (2019); I-Park Foundation (2019); the School of Visual Arts, NYC (2018); the Institute of Contemporary Art at MECA&D (solo, 2015); the Ackland Art Museum and a commission for the permanent collection at the UNC Alumni Sculpture Garden (2015); among others. He recently has been awarded the inaugural 2022 CMCA Artist Residency in collaboration with the Ellis-Beauregard Foundation, as well as acceptance into the 2023 CMCA Biennial (Rockland, ME). Charles received his Master of Fine Arts degree from UNC at Chapel Hill, where he focused on sculpture and performance. Previously he studied painting at the University of Maine through the indigenous Wabanaki program.

Margrethe Aanestad (b. 1974, Stavanger, Norway) lives and works between Stavanger, Norway and New York, USA. Her practice encompasses drawing, painting and sculpture. Aanestad studied fine arts at the Rogaland Art College and graduated with a BA from the University of Stavanger in art history, aesthetic philosophy, film theory & history and cultural management & leadership. Aanestad has exhibited worldwide. Solo exhibitions include Abingdon Studios, Blackpool, UK (2019); Kunsthall Stavanger, Norway (2018); Dimensions Variable, Miami, FL (2015) and Open Source Gallery (2013) in New York, NY. She participated in group shows and art fairs in California, New York, Miami, Copenhagen, Tokyo and multiple cities in her native Norway. In 2011, Aanestad co-founded an artist-run gallery, Prosjektrom Normanns. in Stavanger, which she co-directed until its closing in 2020.

Based in Brooklyn, Yi Gallery produces five exhibitions annually. Guided by the commitment to provide an open and well-informed platform for conceptually rigorous and formally inventive projects, the poetic and critical program prioritizes context and discovery. Informed by the founder's international experience and interest in interdisciplinary inquiries, Yi Gallery aims to present a true reflection of the vitality and diversity of today's contemporary practices. Through building a nurturing support structure for a focused roster of emerging artists, the aesthetically-oriented program fosters ongoing dialogue between local and international artists. The gallery is situated inside Industry City, on the Brooklyn waterfront. Prior to opening the Industry City space in October 2021, Yi Gallery operated as an itinerant curatorial project since 2018 and ran a collaborative space in Bushwick from 2020 to 2021.

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