



NICOLA
VASSELL

Che Lovelace: Bathers

CHE LOVELACE
OPENING

MAR 9 — APR 15
MAR 9, 5 — 8 PM

Gallery Hours
For Press Inquiries

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–6 pm
Hannah Gottlieb-Graham, ALMA Communications — hannah@almacommunications.co

138 10th Ave. New York, NY 10011

NICOLA VASSELL

March 9 — April 15, 2023

Nicola Vassell is pleased to present *Che Lovelace: Bathers*, a series of paintings chronicling the artist's exploration of the body in and around water. With an expressionistic hand, Lovelace weaves stories of life, freedom, and post-colonialism in his native Trinidad, into a tapestry of abstracted landscapes, still lifes, and portraits. His creative process is expository and expansive, articulating scenes of Caribbean life with complexity and dimension.

Meditating on famed depictions of bathers throughout the art historical canon, Lovelace was particularly fascinated by artists who were lesser known for the subject. One such, Edvard Munch, rendered bathers with energy and “vitalism”, a philosophy germinated from Aristotelian times that emphasized the vital forces of nature and good health. Framing this immemorial trope in the specificity of his own culture, Lovelace celebrates the bather as an intrinsic figure of the Trinidadian vernacular. Throughout the Caribbean, the river is a site for both daily routine and sacred work. In each painting, he portrays the bather as a vessel of duality: echoing the classical and the contemporary, the West and the Tropics, the solitary and the communal, the Christian baptism and Yemanja of the Orisha faith. “I am aligning myself with tradition, but I am also trying to clear a new space for how one can interpret bathers,” he reflects, “I felt there was a sense of familiarity with the term.”

Composed of tropical hues and gestural strokes, Lovelace's work is infused with an intimate sense of place. In Trinidad, to engage with the water is to connect with the soul. It offers a moment of solace, a resting place for reflection. Each canvas depicts bodies submerged in rocky waterfalls, shallow pools, and river limes: the capillaries of Trinidad's Caribbean landscape. Whether referencing the Gulf of Paria, Valencia, or Matura, his audience can identify with the experience of wading in water—a portrayal catalyzed by the artist's process of revisiting themes and reworking compositions, layering the memory of various locations onto the same canvas for months, sometimes years. Positing water as a unifying element, Lovelace feels “the work is rooted in this experience, in little moments of quiet, but also of community. There are some paintings that I feel are slightly more symbolic, almost mysterious, alluding to a space that is not even here, but are portals to.”

Nowhere is this symbolism more ambitious than in the painting *Large Boardwalk Bathers* (2023), a work in which acrylic and dry pigment were applied to six board panels. Though densely populated, each figure is given room for quiet contemplation—a place of its own within the canvas. Like parallel universes, Lovelace's multi-panel paintings establish dynamic exchange between the foreground and background. He rearranges his panels like puzzle pieces, shifting positions to disrupt order and ignite unexpected focal points until a complete image is revealed. Whether painting the tranquility of a singular bather in the sea, or the unified entanglement of bodies at Carnival, Lovelace creates an axis for energy, mystery, and movement across the image plane. By illuminating the intricate characteristics of Trinidadian life, Lovelace paints a rapturous vision of his people and his home.

NICOLA VASSELL

March 9 — April 15, 2023

About Che Lovelace

Che Lovelace is an unabashed painter of the flora, fauna, figures, landscapes and rituals of the Caribbean. His depictions of the rhythms of Trinidadian life are informed by his rootedness there, having established his studio practice on the rural outskirts of Port-of-Spain. Lovelace likens his material and formal interventions—such as cleaving the canvas into quadrants and dissecting the picture plane into cubist constituents—to exploring Caribbean selfhood as an integration of antecedents and transforming simplicity into wonder. Lovelace’s fascination with Caribbean iconography is a metaphorical expedition through postcolonialism, resistance, freedom, mythology, and nature. The result is a complex and nuanced expression of his own sense of identity, politics, place, and community.

He received his training at l’Ecole Régionale des Beaux-Arts de la Martinique. Solo exhibitions of his work include Presented as Natural, Various Small Fires, Seoul (2022); From the Edge of the Rock, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles (2021); New Paintings, LOFTT Gallery, Port of Spain (2018); Che Lovelace – Paintings, Galerie Eric Hussenot, Paris and Half Gallery, NY (2017); Lovers, Y Gallery, Trinidad (2013) among others. Group exhibitions of his work include Uncanny Interiors, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York (2022); Still Life: An Ongoing Story, Galerie Sébastien Bertrand, Geneva (2019); Get Up, Stand Up Now, Somerset House, London (2019); Turps Banana, Vigo Gallery, London (2012) among others. His work is in the public collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, X Museum, Beijing, CH, and the Aïshti Foundation, Lebanon. Lovelace lectures at the University of the West Indies Creative Arts Campus.

About Nicola Vassell Gallery

Nicola Vassell Gallery is a contemporary art gallery committed to discourse that widens the lens of the history and future of art. Its focus is on developing an inter-generational, cross-disciplinary program of international artists and thinkers.

Gallery Hours

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–6 pm

138 10th Ave. New York, NY 10011

For Press Inquiries

Hannah Gottlieb-Graham, ALMA Communications — hannah@almacommunications.co