

HYPERALLERGIC

Kemar Keanu Wynter Cooks Up an Abstract Feast

The Brooklyn-born artist introduces abstraction to his ongoing archive of Caribbean heritage and cuisine.



Isabella Rafky 11 mins ago

Heralds, Kemar Keanu Wynter's solo show at Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery in New York, features a suite of nine paintings on paper and considers the artist's established abstraction of food in reference to his family history. The exhibition calls to mind the delectable sensory archive of Jamaican heritage in Wynter's earlier works, now presented in hexagonal frames that reveal fields of abstraction. Partitioned in an X formation, the works on view harken to flags, family crests, shields, and Tupperware tubs filled with densely textured foods.

Wynter uses heraldry, a system used to regulate coat-of-arm designs and corresponding family legacies, to build upon previously-untold stories about his diasporic Jamaican upbringing in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. His continued inclusion of grommets in the paper brings tactile materiality to the forefront, while saltire-partitioned frames reinforce a sense of robustness in fragility.

Throughout each work, there are four quadrants, two of which contain winding pastel traces, routing the color palettes integral to the harmonious collision at the piece's epicenter. The other two sections' blurred nature reconciles these ingredients of color by blending them together — almost digesting them. Wynter reflexively tests his boundaries with rebellious markings that ever so slightly slip over the borders. This permeability between sections is particularly notable in "(XX.) Cassava Pone" (2023), where a bright blue



Kemar Keanu Wynter, "(XX.) Cassava Pone" (2023), oil pastel, acrylic, graphite, and grommets on collaged French cardstock, 19 1/2 x 23 1/2 in.

coil flirts with the neighboring panel, a deep brownish blend underscored by that same blue.

The artist's technique — reminiscent of a familiar scene when one's side dishes touch the main, creating a unique flavor on the dinner plate — gives the exhibition life and alludes to the complementary nature of generational memory and evolving heritage. In "(IV.) August Fishcakes" (2022), shades of blue, pink, and orange situate both artist and viewer in an end-of-summer memory, imbued with the burgeoning tastes of a dish both inherited and remade.

Heralds, a concoction of Wynter's signature warmth in different forms of abstraction, underpins both artistic practice and heritage in a lasting legacy that is layered upon and made stronger by reimagining traditions.