

Smack Mellon

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Madjeen Isaac, *Come as You Are, This Is Our Battle Too*

[Gallery Two]

September 28-November 17, 2024

Opening Reception: Sat. September 28, 6-8PM



Gonna Search the Sky For New Horizons to Unfold, 2024. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches. Courtesy of the Artist.

Come as You Are, This Is Our Battle Too is an exhibition of recent works that centers healing and transformation. Following a battle with an unexpected health diagnosis starting in fall 2023, the artist embarked on an inward journey exploring the depths of her own spirit, reflecting on the guidance, prayers, and support of her community.

The imagery draws from the artist's involvement in local community gardens, as well as Black and Caribbean diaspora's relationship to communal establishments such as the *lakou* which are common in Haiti. *Lakou* in Haitian-kreyòl translates to "communal yard" or "small village" that is usually built upon and passed down through multiple generations who live, engage and work cooperatively. Once a catalyst for revolutions, these spaces bridge connections between bodies, community, and land while holding space for rage, celebration, ancestral connection, and most importantly agricultural autonomy. In a new direction for the artist, the exhibition also includes two sculptural installations. *Nou Rive: In Between Worlds* (2024), the first part of which translates to "we have arrived" in Haitian-kreyòl, appears as handmade pennant flags in various natural and nostalgic textures. In the center of the gallery,

Smack Mellon

Ancestors (2024) comprises a mixed media installation of clay planters filled with moss and dried plants emerging from a construction of brick and wood. Together with the paintings, this larger body of work places the artist firmly within a landscape of introspection, collectivity, and fortitude.

Isaac's reimagined landscapes represent places that the artist has occupied emotionally and mentally while grappling with grief, anger, and sadness, and seeking hope, love, and grace. Illuminated by various sources of light and celestial beings, her paintings allude to her ancestors, who are constantly present. The exhibition serves as an invitation for viewers to come to the work with their own battles, asking: what keeps one grounded in the face of adversity? How can we heal collectively and individually toward sovereign futures? As the exhibition's title suggests, the deep connections forged through community, family, and spirituality provide strength, allowing life's major struggles to be dispersed among many, while gathering support focused towards healing.

BIO:
Madjeen Isaac is a first generation Haitian-American artist whose practice is rooted in home, communality and belonging. Isaac reimagines and hybridizes landscapes to center boundless Black and Caribbean existences depicting joy, leisure, and liberation. Ultimately she challenges ideas around liminal spaces and the constraints of reality. By reimagining and suggesting ideal worlds of access and autonomy, she inspires viewers to internalize and claim their right to a better reality.

Isaac received a BFA in Fine Art from the Fashion Institute of Technology and an MA in Art + Edu & Community Practice from New York University. Residencies/fellowships include Smack Mellon's Artist Studio Program, BRIClab: Contemporary Artist Residency Program, the Laundromat Project Fellowship and Lakou NOU Artist Residency Program at Haiti Cultural Exchange. She has exhibited at the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, Swivel Gallery, Jenkins Johnson Projects Gallery, The Frost Art Museum, The Art and Design Gallery at FIT among others. In 2023, Isaac collaborated with KITH to create an Artist Series Capsule Collection in Honor of Black History Month. She is the recipient of the 2024 NY-SCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship for Painting and the 2022 Women of Distinction Award for Arts and Entertainment from NY Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn.

This exhibition is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, New York City Council Member Lincoln Restler, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, and with generous support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Ruth Foundation for the Arts, Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Robert Lehman Foundation, Select Equity Group Foundation, many individuals and Smack Mellon's Members.

Smack Mellon's programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and with generous support from The Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund of The New York Community Trust, Jerome Foundation, The Roy and Niuta Titus Foundation, Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation Inc., and Exploring The Arts. In-kind donations are provided by Materials for the Arts, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs/NYC Department of Sanitation/NYC Department of Education.

Space for Smack Mellon's programs is generously provided by the Walentas family and Two Trees Management. Smack Mellon would like to extend a special thanks to all of the individuals, foundations, and businesses who have contributed to the NYC COVID-19 Response & Impact Fund.