

Heat Salt Acid Waves

The Painting Gallery @ Uarts
Anderson Building
8th Floor
333 S Broad Street
Philadelphia, Pa

Heat Salt Acid Waves is an exhibition of recent works by Leeza Meksin, Nickola Pottinger, and Padma Rajendran, curated by Lauren Whearty at the Painting Gallery at University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pa. The exhibition opens with a reception on Thursday January 30, 4-6 pm and is on view from January 27 to February 27, 2020

While their stories and subjects range widely, Leeza Meksin, Nickola Pottinger, and Padma Rajendran's works come together through the process in which they think through material, color, and form. Images, processes, and other elements ebb and flow in the breadth of their works, as each artists flirts with and crosses the boundaries of many traditional art categories and expectations, especially our expectations of Painting - as both a process and a history.

Meksin, Pottinger, & Rajendran are all New York based artists who happen live between two different cultures: American and Russian, Jamaican, or Malaysian respectively. This is but one way to think through the connections amongst their works as existing across categories and working methods such as: abstraction and representation, illusionistic and physical space, drawn/painted and collaged marks. Their mastery of craft and form makes them comfortable moving between each category in complex and exciting ways as they incorporate surprising combinations of materials, processes, and other elements along the way.

Whether visually present in each work or not, the body is an important aspect to each artist and represented in a variety of ways - from image based representation to the evidence of physical actions, and our experience of scale. We see it as the actual form of the artwork in Pottinger's pieces upon which narrative is built. In Meksin's work we see it through representations but also through the material narrative of spandex, gauze, and other elements meant for stretching across and draping over the human form. Her stiffened fabrics create architectural elements like doors, and windows which refer to the scrims and screens of paint, as well as the ancient Egyptian use of false doors in tombs which allow the spirit to pass from our world to the next. Rajendran uses the form of jeans as a symbol within her narrative, where the image and its meaning unite as it's form acts as both the shape of the painting, and the scaffolding for meaning.

For each artist color is a necessity to their work. It is not something merely applied, it is embedded in the marks, materials, feelings, and gestures. It is imperative to the expression of each work, weaving it into their works as it is woven into our contemporary material and cultural world. Neon and metallic fabrics correspond to performance and dance and enclosure or architecture, while the gritty layers of collage and pastel create a depth of narrative found through the process of drawing itself. Citrus, tropical plants, spices and other elements of taste are brought out through their rich colors and soft forms.

Through the materials and imagery that each artist incorporates we see an elevation of materials and images of our everyday contemporary experience elevated and transformed into fine art materials in an exciting way. Making something as ubiquitous as Spandex, jeans, or recognizably collaged items feel unquestionably important, complex, and appropriate to our relationship with the stuff of life is an amazing feat which Meksin, Pottinger, and Rajendran accomplish with ease and bravado.

Leeza Meksin is a New York-based interdisciplinary artist working in painting, installation, textiles, public art and multiples. Her work investigates (the often false) binaries of hard/soft, male/female, public/private, and highlights parallels between conventions of painting, architecture and our bodies. Meksin has created site-specific installations for The Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), Brooklyn (2018-19), The National Academy of Design, NYC (2018), The Lenfest Center for the Arts, NYC (2017), The Utah Museum of Contemporary Art in Salt Lake City (2016), The Kitchen, NYC (2015), BRIC Media Arts, Brooklyn (2015), Brandeis University (2014), and in a National Endowment for the Arts funded project in New Haven, CT for Artspace (2012). She is the recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Emerging Artist grant (2015) and in 2013 co-founded Ortega y Gasset Projects, an artist-run gallery and curatorial collective in Brooklyn, NY, that she currently co-directs. Meksin's work has been featured in *Bomb Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Village Voice* and many other publications. She has been awarded artist residencies at The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, TX (2019) and The Banff Centre for Art and Creativity in Canada (2017), among others. Meksin has been teaching at Columbia University School of the Arts since 2015. Currently her large scale sculptures *Turret Tops* are on view at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum through August 2020.

Nickola Pottinger had her first solo exhibition at Parker Gallery in Los Angeles, in Winter 2019. Her work has been shown in group shows at St. Charles Project in Baltimore, Mild Climate in Tennessee, Spring Break, Far X Wide, Deli Gallery and Ortega y Gasset Projects in New York. She has been nominated twice for the Rema Hortmann Emerging Artist Grant in 2019 and 2018. Nickola uses collaged drawings and painting to construct larger than life size works on paper. She builds her surfaces with materials and textures that illustrate a range of mark making, techniques and processes that constantly chart the traces of her hand. Like a map, the works have their own topography, where elements combine to create pathways that lead to a collapse of time and space. Nickola was born in Jamaica in the West Indies where she left at an early age with her family to move to New York. She received her BFA from The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 2008. And continues to live and work in Brooklyn, New York where she grew up. She is a co-director of the artist run space, Ortega y Gasset Projects in Brooklyn. Her work has been written up in Contemporary Art Daily, Hyper Allergic, and the Epoch Times.

Padma Rajendran lives and works in Catskill, NY. Her dye drawings on fabric experiment with the clash and combination of structural patterning. Her content rich compositions reference the duality and contradictions of culture and the multi-faceted definitions of universal heritage. Encoding cloth with these adornments, inks, symbols, and scenes is a way to honor these stories, traditions, and strains.

Padma was born in Klang, Malaysia in 1985, and as a child, she moved to many places- Saudi Arabia, Wales, within the US: New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Iowa. Paths of migration and observing culture(s) was an interest of hers even then. She studied at Bryn Mawr College and received her M.F.A. at Rhode Island School of Design. She teaches printmaking at SUNY Purchase and Parsons School of Design and is a teaching artist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She has taught workshops at Anderson Ranch Center for the Arts and was an instructor and guest critic for New York Crit Club in 2019. She has had solo exhibitions at Ortega y Gasset Projects (Brooklyn) and WAAM (Woodstock NY). She has exhibited at High Tide Gallery (Philadelphia), Crystal Flowers Art Salon (New York), Field Projects (New York), Beers London (UK), the Wassaic Project (Wassaic, NY), Unpaved Gallery (Yucca Valley, CA), September Gallery (Hudson NY), Blackburn 20/20 (New York), and an upcoming solo show at BRIC Arts Media House (Brooklyn, NY). Her print edition from the 2018 Prints for Protest portfolio is part of the RISD Museum's collection. She has completed residencies at Ortega y Gasset Projects, the Studios at Mass MoCA, Women's Studio Workshop, Lower East Side Printshop, and the Ox-Bow School of Art. She has been interviewed for Kajal Magazine, the Art Maze Magazine blog, AF Art Magazine, and Maake Magazine. Her work has also been featured in New American Paintings and most recently Chronogram Magazine.

Lauren Whearty is a Philadelphia based painter, curator, and educator. Her observational and memory based works use ubiquitous objects and imagery that relate to lived experiences and narratives to investigate sensational and material qualities of paint and process. Her works have been featured at such venues as the Woodmere Museum of Art, The Center for Emerging Visual Artists, Vox Populi, and Bridgette Mayer Galleries in Philadelphia, Pa, The Painting Center and Ortega y Gasset Projects in Ny, Satellite Contemporary in Las Vegas, Nv, ROY G BIV and Ohio State's Urban Art Space in Columbus, Oh. Lauren received her MFA in painting from The Ohio State University where she received a Graduate Teaching Associate Award, an Arts and Humanities Research Grant, and was nominated for the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant. She received her BFA in Painting from Tyler School of Art, Temple University. She has attended Yale's Summer School of Art through the Ellen Battell Stoeckel Fellowship, Vermont Studio Center residencies. Lauren currently teaches at Tyler School of Art and University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pa and is a Co-Director at Ortega y Gasset Projects, a non-profit artist run gallery and curatorial collective in Brooklyn, Ny. Lauren has been selected by an independent selection committee for the 2020 Golden Foundation for the Arts Residency Program. Lauren will be attending the residency in June.

Currently Lauren has a solo exhibition on view at One River School in Hartsdale, Ny from February - April, 2020