

SIKKEMA
JENKINS&CO.
YASHUA KLOS
OUR LABOUR

October 22 – December 3, 2022

Sikkema Jenkins & Co. is pleased to present *OUR LABOUR*, a solo exhibition of recent work by Yashua Klos on view October 22 through December 3. *OUR LABOUR* was first shown at the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College in spring 2022 and will be Klos' inaugural exhibition at the gallery. The presentation of *OUR LABOUR* at Sikkema Jenkins & Co. expands upon the body of work created for the Wellin and debuts several new sculptural and collage pieces.

Yashua Klos approaches the idea of identity as multi-faceted, adaptive, and ever-changing. He explores identity as a composite of self-conception, family histories, environmental influences, and mythologies. In his portraiture and collage work, Klos explores how material and social conditions shape one's identity and experience of moving through the world. His process employs a unique intervention on the traditional method of woodblock printing: carving, inking, and hand-pressure printing to create his own source material for collaging. He then cuts and arranges these separate printed elements to form exquisitely textured, amalgamated portraits.

The body of work featured in *OUR LABOUR* is significantly personal for Klos, who recently reconnected with his estranged patrilineal side of the family through a match on a DNA test. A message received from a then-unknown relative turned into a life-altering encounter for the artist, who was soon welcomed back into an extended network of long-lost uncles, aunts, and cousins. Klos foregrounds these developing bonds of kinship and the new dimensions invoked within his own identity through large-scale, collaged portraits. Studying and recreating the faces of his family members opened an intimate space of reflection for Klos, tracing in their features shared physical lineages and familiar subjectivities. Intertwined Michigan wildflowers and overlaid Art Deco motifs reference the shifting environmental identity of Detroit, where Klos' family has resided since the Great Migration. Adorning the portraits, these elements speak to the aesthetic ambitions of the city's economic past, and the underlying resilience of natural forms to grow and reclaim the urban landscape.

The central piece of the exhibition, sharing the title *OUR LABOUR*, seeks to represent the various manifestations of labor that have shaped the architecture of Klos' family for generations. The monumental woodblock print and ink canvas was inspired by Diego Rivera's Detroit Industry Murals at the Detroit Institute of Arts, which Klos first viewed while visiting his relatives in the city. Sometime after, Klos began to conceptualize Rivera's murals as a compositional blueprint for his own family tree, and the legacy of his family's work in the Detroit auto plants. In it, the original faces of Rivera's anonymous, mostly white male workers are replaced with portraits of his own Black relatives. For Klos, reimagining these subjects becomes its own form of record-

making and keeping—an affirmation of his family's labor, both within their relationships to one another, and the larger, overlooked history of Black labor that built the United States.

The new works featured in this exhibition of *OUR LABOUR* include new pieces from his African welding mask series. Constructed from individual maple cubits, the masks draw influence from the designs of West and Central African cultures, including those in Mali, Burkina Faso, and the Congo—regions to which Klos traces his own distant ancestry. These masks were traditionally used in a public, religious contexts, covering the individual identity of the wearer during performances of conjuration and spiritual activation. In the modern-day context of welding, masks are a necessary occupational safeguard, and an essential part of an industrial worker's uniform. Klos' sees his sculptures as hybrid creations, existing between and mediating the dual capacities of invocation and protection. He completes each mask by torching its wood exterior, allowing the flames to indiscriminately char the surface. Klos views this torching as transformational: fusing together these forms and histories, while activating and releasing the mask's power beyond the hands of its creator.

Yashua Klos (b. 1977, Chicago, IL) received a BFA from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb (2000) and an MFA from Hunter College, City University of New York (2009), both in Fine Art. Recent exhibitions include the major solo show *Yashua Klos: OUR LABOUR* at the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY (2022) curated by Tracy L. Adler, and *Yashua Klos: OUR LIVING* at Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockland, ME (2022). His work was also included in the group exhibitions *Elegies: Still Lives in Contemporary Art* at the Museum of African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA (2022); and *Africa, Imagined: Reflections on Modern and Contemporary Art* at Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, MI (2022). His works are included in the permanent collections of the Seattle Art Museum, WA, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, MI, and the Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY. He has been awarded residencies at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, BRIC Arts, the Joan Mitchell Center, Skowhegan, and the Vermont Studio Center. Klos is the recipient of a 2014 Joan Mitchell Foundation grant and a 2015 New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship. Klos lives and works in Harlem, NY, and the Bronx, NY, respectively.

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

ARTURO HERRERA, SHEILA HICKS, ERIN SHIRREFF
DECEMBER 9, 2022 – JANUARY 28, 2023

For additional information please contact Laura Weinthal at 212.929.2262 or laura@sikkemajenkinsco.com.

530 W 22ND STREET - NEW YORK, NY 10011
212.929.2262 - GALLERY@SIKKEMAJENKINSCO.COM
OPEN TUESDAY – SATURDAY 10 TO 6