

# PI ARTWORKS

**Pi Artworks London:**     ***American Histories***  
Kenseth Armstead, Firelei Báez, Maria Berrio, Chitra Ganesh,  
Fay Ku, Lina Puerta, Frohawk Two Feathers, William Villalongo,  
and Saya Woolfalk  
Curated by Alexandra Schwartz  
18 November 2016 – 7 January 2017  
Private View: Thursday 17 November 2016, 18:00-21:00

Pi Artworks London is pleased to announce *American Histories* curated by New-York based curator Alexandra Schwartz. *American Histories* is the second of five exhibitions that make up Pi Artworks London's Curatorial Season that runs from October 2016 – July 2017. For the season Övül Ö. Durmusoglu, Alexandra Schwartz, Sacha Craddock, Oliver Sumner, and Morgan Quaintance have been invited to devise and develop their own curatorial project working with artists predominantly or entirely from outside the gallery's roster.

*American Histories* brings together nine artists, all based in the United States, who explore cultural histories through figurative works on paper. Their work reflects their own diverse heritages and influences while speaking more broadly to the array of international cultures that make up the United States. The exhibition spotlights how artists examine and synthesize such themes through a personal lens.

Cultural difference, and its link to issues surrounding immigration and inclusiveness, is one of the most pressing political issues of our day, as has recently been evidenced by the refugee crisis in Europe, the presidential race in the United States, and numerous other events worldwide. While the artists in this exhibition do not explicitly address politics, they are concerned with processing matters of difference through their art; many of the artists come from international backgrounds or are themselves first-generation American. All working on paper, they call on international artistic traditions—some relating to their personal heritages, some not—to reflect and comment upon the interconnections between global histories and contemporary cultures. Though united by a passion for history, an interest in racial, ethnic, and gender identities, and an emphasis on figuration, the artists in *American Histories* are wide-ranging and diverse.

In his epic series of drawings, *Spook*, Kenseth Armstead, born Washington, D.C.; lives Brooklyn, chronicles the true story of James Armistead Lafayette, an African-American slave who became a spy for the United States' first director of central intelligence, George Washington. Firelei Báez, born Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic; lives New York, uses large-scale drawing to depict objects of personal adornment—textiles, hair

designs, body ornaments—that speak to the complexities of Black identities. **Maria Berrio**, born Bogotá, Colombia; lives Brooklyn, uses painting and collage, mostly with Japanese papers, to create works that blend historical and religious allusions with examinations of contemporary notions of gender, sexuality, and family. **Chitra Ganesh**, born Brooklyn; lives Brooklyn, combines a wide array of references—Hindu mythology, European fairy tales, Bollywood posters—in lushly detailed works focusing on traditionally marginalized figures from art historical and literary narratives. In her drawings, **Fay Ku**, born Taipei, Taiwan; lives Brooklyn, conjures surreal worlds in which Chinese scroll painting, Italian Renaissance altarpieces, and contemporary pop culture, play equally influential roles. Raised in Colombia, **Lina Puerta**, born Englewood, New Jersey; lives New York, is concerned with the natural and built environments and their fraught relationships to the human body; the two- and three-dimensional works shown here combine handmade paper with found objects, ranging from rocks and seeds, to textiles and beads. **Frohawk Two Feathers**, born Chicago; lives Los Angeles, invents elaborate historical narratives that cast light on issues of colonialism and race; the drawings in the exhibition depict fictitious, 18<sup>th</sup>-century male and female warriors who are also informed by the present-day Nation of Gods and Earths, an offshoot of the Nation of Islam. **William Villalongo**, born Hollywood, Florida; lives Brooklyn, brings together imagery from African-American and American history and mass culture to orchestrate a conversation between history and art. Working in painting, video, drawing, and collage, his recent series of hand-cut velvet-paper works call on a repertory of cultural signifiers to reflect on the interrelationship between human—particularly Black—bodies, nature, and society. **Saya Woolfalk**, born, Gifu, Japan; lives Brooklyn, makes installations, videos, paintings, and works on paper exploring the increasing hybridity of global cultures and technologies. Influenced by anthropology, her work takes the form of fictional narratives exploring the effects of these seismic shifts on cultural and gender identities.

**Pi Artworks London is open Tuesday – Friday, 10:00 – 18:00 and Saturdays, 11:00 – 18:00. For information, interviews and images, please contact Neil Jefferies:**

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**Represented Artists:**

Yeşim AKDENİZ  
Volkan ASLAN  
Nancy ATAKAN  
Abraham David CHRISTIAN  
Osman DİNÇ  
İpek DUBEN  
Nezaket EKİCİ  
Parastou FOROUHAR

Maria FRIBERG  
Allen GRUBESIC  
Susan HEFUNA  
Tayeba Begum LIPI  
Maude MARIS  
Nejat SATI  
Paul SCHWER  
Gülşay SEMERCİOĞLU  
Ayten TURANLI

Mehmet Ali UYSAL  
Yuşa YALÇINTAŞ  
Farniyaz ZAKER

London Art Fair, 18 – 22 January 2017  
The Armory Show, 2 – 5 March 2017  
Art Basel Hong Kong, 23 – 25 March 2017  
Art Cologne, 26 – 29 April 2017