

Press Release

Mark Bradford Exotica

Hauser & Wirth Hong Kong
26 September 2024 – 1 March 2025



Hong Kong... Beginning 26 September, Hauser & Wirth will present 'Exotica,' a solo exhibition of new, formally innovative works by Mark Bradford. In an exhibition that extends the artist's recent formal and thematic investigations while pushing his practice towards distinctly new inventions, Bradford probes the enduring impact of colonialism and concepts of 'otherness' through the lens of individual experience.

Consisting of around 20 new paintings, 'Exotica' introduces a signature staining technique, wherein the artist uses caulk to create shadow-like imprints upon the canvas. These forms inject Bradford's layered compositions with a trace of fantasy, strangeness, and memory. In its diversity of form and material – also encompassing works created with fabric dye, inked-paper, and oxidized paper – the exhibition reflects the continued evolution of Bradford's play with figuration.

The exhibition's title references a 1968 encyclopedia that catalogued exotic plants from a western perspective, for a western reader. The text took on special significance for Bradford in the way it reflects a colonial impulse to document and categorize the things perceived as 'other,' and the idea that naming something equates to understanding. Bradford took this catalogue as a starting point to consider how we create, imagine, and internalize such concepts of the 'exotic,' turning inward to examine his own preconceptions of what things are, and how those same preconceptions define his reality and experience.

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Fifteen detail works take viewers into the woods – not any woods, but the woods of the artist’s imagination. As a black man growing up in an urban environment, Bradford attends to his own perceptions of the woods as something dangerous and foreign. These richly layered paintings extend Bradford’s treatment of the themes of migration and displacement, evoking the threats of a journey to, and through, the unknown.



The exhibition is anchored by five large-scale figurative works centered on the agave plant. A monocarpic variety, agave plants bloom only once, at the end of their lifecycle. Bradford was drawn to the idea that agave exposes its richness and full embodiment only once within its life, as a metaphor for peoples whose colonized conditions require them to conform and adapt to their circumstances, rather than to flourish.

Notably, this new body of works signals a significant shift in perspective, setting the viewer eye-to-eye with Bradford’s compositions and the fictions of the ‘exotic’ they contain.

Learning

Mark Bradford and Hauser & Wirth Learning are collaborating on a social initiative critical to the exhibition. In partnership with the Bridge+, a local social enterprise in Hong Kong, Hauser & Wirth and Mark Bradford have devised a learning program to accompany the exhibition that engages with a group of young people, aged 16 – 18, from the Sham Shui Po neighborhood. In July 2024, participants explored Bradford’s ‘Merchant Poster’ body of work in a series of workshops designed to introduce young creators to the processes of screen printing and photo emulsion. Bradford will collaborate with the student participants to realize a mural in the Bridge+ space depicting a map of Hong Kong. The students will install the ‘Merchant Posters’ they create during the workshop in the Bridge+ space, adjacent to the mural.

About the Artist

Mark Bradford (b. 1961 in Los Angeles) is a contemporary artist known for his large-scale abstract paintings created out of paper. Characterized by its layered formal, material, and conceptual complexity, his work explores social and political structures that objectify marginalized communities and the bodies of vulnerable populations. After accumulating layers of various types of paper onto canvas, Bradford excavates their surfaces using power tools to explore economic and social structures that define contemporary subjects. His practice includes painting, sculpture, video, photography, printmaking, and other media. In addition to his studio practice, Bradford engages in social projects alongside exhibitions of his work that bring contemporary ideas outside the walls of exhibition spaces and into communities with limited exposure to art.

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Bradford received his BFA from the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in 1995 and his MFA from CalArts in 1997. He has since been widely exhibited internationally and received numerous awards. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art; Hauser & Wirth, Menorca; the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Hauser & Wirth, London; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; and Long Museum West Bund, Shanghai.

The exhibition at Hauser & Wirth Hong Kong coincides with Bradford's first solo museum presentation in Germany at the Hamburger Bahnhof–Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart in Berlin (6 September 2024 - 10 March 2025).

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G/F, 8 Queen's Road Central, Central,
Hong Kong

Gallery hours:

Tuesday – Saturday, 11 am – 7 pm

Caption and Courtesy Credits:

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Purple
2024
Mixed media on canvas
244.5 x 168.6 x 5 cm / 96.25 x 66.4 x 2 in

Mrs. Pollock double
2024
Mixed media on canvas
91 x 61 cm / 36 x 24 in