



Presents

*UNMOORED: Deconstructing The Narratives of Self/The Other*  
*June 2nd - July 22nd 2023 - Portland, Maine*



Guest Artist/Curator: *Billy Gerard Frank*

## CURATOR'S STATEMENT

UNMOORED: Deconstructing The Narratives of Self/The Other

*“But the subject that concerns us here is that of the emotion of belonging to and anchoring in a land of origin- the at once imperturbable and unshakeable desire for a home.”*

- Maboula Soumahara

Intertwined autobiographical narratives centered around culture, identity, childhood, landscapes, displacement, and exile filtered through the prism of memories collapsing present, past, and future are some of the themes and symbolisms that Samira Abbassy and Simonette Quanina grapple with in their works. Both artists are based in New York and their art practices encompass large-scale drawings, paintings, collages, sculptures, etc drawing from their place of origin and multicultural backgrounds to deconstruct and reconstruct pictorial psychological narratives that frame complex experiences and a sense of place: Samira is Iranian and grew up in England, Simonette is from the Caribbean Island of Saint Vincent and have lived in other Caribbean Islands.

Though these artists hold a vast geographical and historical distance there are many parallels between seemingly disparate worlds. Simonette and Samira's works unfold a fable through art practices that weave more poetic, narrative, and imagery paintings and drawings, located somewhere between the mythological, fantastical, and contemporary. They meet at the intersection of their overlapping and divergent cultural backgrounds that informed their art and subjectivity, contesting gender, femininity, culture, and more.

Through fluid figuration capturing personal and intimate portraits, depicted memories, and familiar imagery; Iranian iconography, and Caribbean African Folklore references, the viewer is transported to this visual world in which both dynamic histories of Iranian and Caribbean culture can simultaneously exist in the same space. There is an intimacy they both hold with their respective visual perspectives informed by their unique experiences of the diaspora and exile.

Samira continues to probe the central themes of (religion, violence, madness, and gender) in her work, capturing the intangible, reshaping images of home and self, when one finds themselves socially and/ or physically exiled. She connects back to her natal land by weaving images of Iranian iconography and effigy, disembodied female figures that are vessels of stoicism and fragility. A collage depicts multiple histories and lived realities of her community that exist and are represented through a central female figure she uses to speak as a point of contact for all. Though the work does not address the current issues in Iran, they are deliberately nuanced and open to multiple readings, settling instead toward universal conditions and modernity.

Through dark, borderless illustrations, obscured faces, and abstract visions, Simonette connects both physically and spiritually to her origins. Her multi-layered drawings peel back the settings of all her past homes in the West Indies, South and North America. She uses the tales of Afro-Caribbean Anansi and folklore that collide with other personal memories interwoven with urban landscapes and verdant vegetation to recreate dreamlike, dense graphite imagery. Her installations puzzle together a sense of past and temporality. This visual, liminal room of constructed blackness is at once a space for hope as well as grief and remembrance.

Both artists are members of the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) established in 1993 and Samira Abbassy is one of the co-founders.



Samira Abbassy

Love And Ammunition  
Oil on gesso panel

Samira Abbassy

*Psychic Surgery*

Oil on gesso panel - 30"x 24" (2022)



## Samira Abbassy



Ocean Series NO. 1 & 2  
Oil on gesso panel 18" x 24"



Simonette Quamina

**Swing: An Ode to Romanticism**  
Monoprint, Collagraph and  
Graphite on Paper 50" x 70"

Simonette Quamina

Round Robin

Woodcut, Monoprint, Collagraph and  
Frottage on Paper

51" x 55"





**Samira Abbassy** was born in Ahwaz, Iran in 1965 and moved to London, UK as a child. After graduating from Canterbury College of Art, she began showing in London. She moved to New York in 1998, where she helped to set up the Eliza-beth Foundation for the Arts, and the EFA Studio Center. Her work has been included in shows at the Metropolitan and the British Museum, and is in private and public collections worldwide, including: the Metropolitan Museum, British Museum, the British Government Art Collection, the Grey Art Gallery at NYU, the Burger Collection, the Donald Rubin collection (Rubin Museum, NY), the Farjaam Collection, Dubai, the Los Angeles County Museum and the Afkhami Collection. During Abbassy's thirty-year career, her work has been the subject of twenty gallery solo shows in London, Dubai, and New York. Her fellowships include: Yaddo fellowship in 2006 and 2022, and Saltonstall in 2017.

She has been awarded two NYFA awards in 2007 and 2018, a Joan Mitchell award in 2010 and a Pollock-Krasner in 2014. Abbassy was also nominated for the Anonymous Was a Woman Award in 2018. In 2019 her work was included in the 26th Venice Biennial presented by Heist Gallery London. Abbassy has also worked as an educator in many educational institutions in the UK and the USA, some of which are: Hunter College, Penn State and the University of Virginia, where she was the artist in Residence in April 2012.

In 2023 her work will be included in *Women Defining Women in Contemporary Art in the Middle East and Beyond*, Curated by Linda Ko-maroff, Los Angeles County Museum, and at the Candice Madey Gallery, NY, and a solo show with Advocartsy in LA.



**Simonette Quamina** was born in Ontario Canada, and spent her early childhood living between South America, the Caribbean, and New York City. Her diverse upbringing is constantly woven into the narratives of her large-scale drawings, prints, and collages. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from the City College of New York, and a Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking from the Rhode Island School of Design.

She is the recipient of the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Studio Program in New York City, the recipient of the 2017-2018 Provincetown Fine Arts Works Center Residency, the 2017 Salem Art Works Fellowship and was a nominee for the prestigious 2020 Queen Sonja Print Award.

Her work has shown both nationally and internationally. It has been acquired for private and public collections, including the Fleet Library and the North Dakota Museum of Art. Her recent group exhibitions include *Estamos Bien - LA TRIENAL 20/21* at El Museo del Barrio in New York City, *Mirror Inflection* at the Shanghai Hongqiao Contemporary Art Museum in China, “*Artist I steal from*” at Gallerie Thaddaeus Ropac in London and solo exhibitions *Canboulay* at Smack Mellon in New York City and *The Night Gardener* at Pace University Gallery and *I left my story in a green glass bottle of hope* at Praxis Gallery in Chelsea, New York.

She maintains an active studio in New York City, and is an Assistant Professor at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

## **GUEST CURATOR**

[Billy Gerard Frank](#) born in Grenada, West Indies, is a multi-disciplinary artist, who works at the intersection of art, filmmaking, design, and activism. Frank's research-based practices interrogate issues dealing with migration, race, exile, global politics, and post-colonial and queer decoloniality, challenging normative discourses around them. His mix-media artworks and films have been exhibited and screened in group and solo shows in museums and institutions like Brooklyn Museum (2020); Yale, and international film festivals like the Berlinale, and Sundance, and is also in several private collections and institutions like the National Academy Museum of Fine Arts and Design, Farnsworth Art Museum, The Butler Institute of American Art, among others. He represented Grenada at the 59th La Biennale di Venezia (2022) and was also one of the artists in the collective who represented the island at the 58th La Biennale di Venezia (2019) and is a recipient of many grants, including the Ford Foundation Grant for his La Biennale Di Venezia project (2022).

Frank is also a founder of the Nova Frontier Film Festival & Lab which showcases and incubates the works of filmmakers and artists from and about the Global African Diaspora, The Middle East, and Latin America, and is also a Lecturer in Directing and Design in the David Geffen School of Drama at Yale and has lectured at universities like NYU, the School of Visual Arts, and York University.

He moved to London as a teenager, where he began painting and exploring experimental video art and installation before moving to New York to pursue further studies in studio art at ateliers like The Art Students League of New York, and The National Academy of Fine Arts and studied under the American abstract expressionist and realist painter John Hultberg, and was John's studio assistant for 5 years where he was introduced to artists like Robert Rauschenberg. He continued his studies (MA) in filmmaking and media arts at The New School for Social Research.



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Hours for Portland, Maine Location:

Tuesday - Thursday: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Friday - Saturday: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm