



COMMONWEAL

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Living in between worlds

Gu and Mamba engage their first-generation experiences to interrogate the development and deployment of identity in America.

PHILADELPHIA, PA (June 20, 2022) - Commonweal is pleased to announce that as the final exhibition of our first year in operation, the gallery has the privilege of featuring mixed media works by **Yikui (Coy) Gu** and **Eustace Mamba**. Beginning on Wednesday, June 29th, and running through Saturday, July 30th, **the opening celebration will take place on Friday, July 1st from 6p - 9p.**

Over the past century the world has developed into a truly global society, resulting in higher rates of migration due to our increased interconnectedness. As of 2020, approximately 272 million people (1 in 30) lived outside their country of birth or citizenship. In America, as of 2019, 18.2 million children (1 in 4) had at least one immigrant parent. Both Eustace and Coy are recipients of these legacies as first-generation Americans born to Chinese and Antiguan parents, respectively. Growing up between two worlds - one that situates itself in the

private sphere of family and expatriate community and one in the public sphere - has resulted for them both in a hyper-sensitivity to cultural nuance which they engage within their works to interrogate the politics surrounding the construction (or deconstruction) of identity.



Yikui (Coy) Gu and his work *A Cut Above*. Gouache, rice, colored pencil, ink, & acrylic on bristol board, 18" h / 24" w, 2021

Yikui (Coy) Gu (b. 1983) will be presenting works from his mixed-media autobiographical series *Classic Yellow*, which uses his wife and himself as subject matter. In probing the specificity, both lived and imagined, of their immigrant Chinese-German marriage, universal truths and absurdities are revealed. The spaces between order and chaos, sincerity and irony, or design and chance are explored using visual elements from the internet, pop culture, and art history. The combination of painting, drawing, and collage, alongside materials ranging from chopsticks to bodily fluids juxtapose against each other, echoing their relationship and serving as a metaphor for it. Through this combination of political, cultural, and domestic imagery, Gu hopes to affirm and subvert the contemporary human condition through a Yellow lens.

Gu has exhibited in solo shows at The Delaware Contemporary, the Chinese American Arts Council (NYC), Capital One Headquarters (Wilmington, DE), the College of Southern Maryland, and Fontbonne University (MO). He has participated in group shows at G.A.S.-Station (Berlin), Central Booking (NYC), The Siena Art Institute, the Center for Contemporary Art (NJ), and the Boston Center for the Arts. His work has been written about in Hyperallergic, the Washington Post, the Philadelphia Inquirer, Art Speil, Yale Daily News, and the New Haven Independent. In June of 2021, Gu's exhibition at The Delaware Contemporary was reviewed by noted poet and scholar, John Yau, for Hyperallergic. He is currently included in a group exhibit at Washington University in St. Louis alongside Kara Walker, Kehinde Wiley, Sonya Clark, and other nationally recognized artists.



Eustace Mamba and his work *Life Cycle*. Mixed Media, 19" h / 16" w, 2022

Eustace Mamba (b. 1992) strives in his work to create a world less intimidating and more accessible to - and reflective of - people who historically have been intimidated by, and not positively represented, in the fine arts. Imbued with autobiographical associations to his experience as a first born and first generation child of Antiguan immigrants, his works are a physical extension of his need to record complex contemporary issues through simple expressions. Mamba aims to engage images,

stories, and information pertinent to building stronger communities through his works as an active approach to resisting colonial ideals and expectations of fine art.

Mamba is a recent graduate (MFA) of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art. His work has been featured in numerous shows at the latter, as well as at Works on Paper Gallery (Philadelphia). He was given the opportunity to create an installation at the Philadelphia International Airport from 2021-22. During his time at the Pennsylvania Academy he was the recipient of numerous awards and honors including the 2020 Faculty Award, the 2020 Philadelphia Mayor's Award as well as The Judith McGregor Caldwell Purchase Prize for the Museum at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Mamba's works reside in prominent local, national and international collections.

In addition to their works on view, each artist will be hosting an event during the duration of their exhibition:

All Ages Dumpling Making Workshop

Saturday, July 9th

2p - 4p

Yikui (Coy) Gu invites dumpling lovers of all ages to a dumpling making workshop at the gallery. Using wonton skins, napa cabbage, ginger, mushrooms and either tofu or beef, Gu will engage with guests in a space of shared sustenance to share their experiences around family, food and identity.

So Called Sewing Collage Workshop

Saturday, July 30th

2p - 4p

Eustace Mamba will lead a workshop inspired by his works on view, which are created through the collage and manipulation of painted fabric elements and are connected through the use of an electric sewing machine. Guests will be invited to create their own compositions with Mamba, integrating sewn portions.

Please join us on Friday, July 1st, from 6p-9p for the opening of this exciting exhibition!

About Commonweal:

Commonweal exhibits the work of emerging artists and mid-career artists and designers from the Philadelphia community who are actively engaging with local, national, and global conversations. The gallery hosts nine two-person exhibitions throughout the year and features a capsule collection of ten design items that are exclusive to the gallery, which rotates annually. Monthly we offer a series of intimate programs intended to broaden an understanding of how and why featured creators engage with the world. Commonweal is owned and operated by Alex Conner, a curator, educator, and entrepreneur who is devoted to Philadelphia and its artists. Commonweal is open Tuesday - Saturday, from 11a - 6p. www.commonweal.gallery.

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