

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL BEY: I BELIEVE IN WHY I'M HERE



1 SEPTEMBER – 1 OCTOBER 2022
PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 1 SEPTEMBER, 6–8PM
SIMON LEE GALLERY, LONDON

Simon Lee Gallery is pleased to present *I Believe in Why I'm Here*, an exhibition of new works by April Bey. April Bey's first solo exhibition in Europe, *I Believe in Why I'm Here*, introduces us to the world of Atlantica, created by the artist over thirty years. The gallery is completely transformed into a magical environment exploding with vibrant life that welcomes and empowers anyone that visits. You'll meet some of Atlantica's inhabitants rendered as large-scale portraits in opulent textiles; sherpa, metallic thread and faux Atlantican fur, adorned with glitter, sequins and hand stitching. Across selfie-style closeups and editorial-esque portraits these individuals hold their space, unapologetically themselves.

Each figure exudes confidence in their own Black skin as they model the planet's fashion line 'Colonial Swag', one of the many brilliantly conceptualised speculative elements of Atlantica designed and executed by April with wit and precision. The figures are accompanied by anthropomorphic plant species collaged in the same richly textured fabrics that remind us of the intrinsic relationship between humans and nature, that all living forms are a product of the natural world. The Atlanticans engage in acts of radical relaxation, nourished by their abundant natural environment and live free from the earthbound limitations imposed on them due to their appearance, identity, or ability. Each of the figures in the show is a real person, selected by April as model Atlantican citizens for their ability to boldly go where no earthling has gone before by defying societal norms and pressures. Triple Minor, Astra Marie, Myjah Moon and Saucye West are all stars in their own right, pushing the boundaries of their own creative practices from genderless fashion to iconic nail art and body positivity, inspiring a generation of Instagram followers and rolemodelling self-love and Queer joy.

- Excerpt from Exhibition Text by Gemma Rolls-Bentley

NOTES TO EDITORS

About April Bey

April Bey (b. 1987) grew up in The Bahamas (New Providence) and now lives and works in Los Angeles as a visual artist and art educator, currently a tenured professor at Glendale College. Bey is in the collections of The Fullerton College Art Gallery, The California African American Museum, The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas and The Center for Contemporary Printmaking. Bey has participated in biennials NE7, NE8, and NE9 in The Bahamas, and has exhibited internationally in Italy, Spain and Accra Ghana, West Africa. Recent solo exhibitions include *I Believe in Why I'm Here*, Simon Lee Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Colonial Swag*, TERN Gallery, Nassau, The Bahamas (2022); *April Bey: When You're on Another Planet and They Just Fly*, GAVLAK Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2022); *April Bey: Atlantica*, The Gilda Region, The California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2021) and *Welcome to Atlantica*, Fullerton College Art Gallery, Fullerton, CA (2020). Selected recent group shows include *Cantos of the Sibylline Sisterhood*, Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery, ArtCenter, Pasadena, CA (2022); *Floating Rib*, The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, Nassau, Bahamas (2021); *TEXTURES: The History and Art of Black Hair*, Kent State Museum, Kent, OH (2021); *Show Me the Signs*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, CA (2020); *Nasty Women*, Gaviak Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2020); *Sanctuary*, California African American Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2020) and *Welcome to the AfroFuture*, New Orleans African American Museum, New Orleans, LA (2019).

About Simon Lee Gallery

Founded in London in 2002, Simon Lee Gallery represents artists of diverse generations whose practices explore a wide range of media, from sculpture and painting to video and photography, and who share a broad interest in an exploration of the conceptual. Aiming to provide a significant international audience for its artists, the gallery also regularly punctuates its programme with historical exhibitions and curated group shows, which present shifts in contemporary art practice and thought, whilst broadening the dialogue with artists outside of the gallery's core programme. In addition to its UK activity, in 2012 the gallery opened a space in Hong Kong, which introduced its artists to a wider public in Asia, with a fully independent programme.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @SimonLeeGallery

www.simonleegallery.com

Image: *If I Wasn't Me, I Can Be Sure I'd Want to Be*, 2022 Jacquard woven textiles, sherpa, glitter, resin and metallic thread on panel 121.9 x 91.4 cm (48 x 36 in.) Courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

For further press information, images and requests please contact Gigi Surel: gigi@simonleegallery.com.