

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

BLUE CURRY

Mango Sunset

17 November – 23 December 2023

Private View | Thursday 16 November 2023 | 6-8 pm



Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is pleased to present a new sculpture by London-based Bahamian artist Blue Curry in The Box, the gallery's micro project space. Combining a hand-printed straw with the bleached carapace of a sea urchin rotating on a stand, Curry plays with motifs of poolside cocktails and resort vacations, exploring notions of leisure, as it relates to the touristic fantasy of a tropical paradise.

Growing up in The Bahamas, a place known for its highly commodified natural beauty, Curry experienced a dissonance between the touristic representation of his homeland compared to the socioeconomic reality of living in the Caribbean. Printed in Risograph, *Mango Sunset's* florid central straw signifies the touristic expectations of the Caribbean: a place of consumption and pleasure, where the uncomfortable reality of power cuts, crime and colonial legacies are pushed aside by holiday makers. Both the urchin carapace and the Risograph jaguar spots reference the reductive ethnographic tendencies central to the tourist economy. For the artist, animal prints evoke visual reminders of exotification and colonial Orientalism, the capability of a mass-reproduced visual stereotype to reduce a nation, culture or entire geographic locale to a set of trivializing characteristics. Likewise, Curry's repeated use of shells can be seen as a comment on the extractive nature of the souvenir industry. Through his viscerally suggestive straw, Curry references this draining of resources and culture, an unseen figure leeching life from a hollow natural form. Rather than contributing to those same parasitic processes, the artist often sources shells using eBay, calling into question the authenticity of Caribbean iconography and the destructive potential of displacing and circulating natural objects on a mass scale.

At the core of Curry's work is an interrogation of how an idealised image of the tropics supersedes reality. Throughout his practice, the artist relates found objects associated with waste and consumption to those of the natural world. He celebrates tensions between kitschy souvenirs—beach towels, tropical drinks and palm trees—and banal materials representing the actual day to day experience of Caribbean life—car tyres, insect screens and cement mixers. By placing the urchin carapace on a rotating solar-panelled stand charged by bright LED light, a pedestal evoking performativity and illusion, Curry activates a space between artificiality and authenticity. *Mango Sunset* complicates the West's conception of the Caribbean as a place of leisure or paradise, asking us to consider for whom this space is paradisiacal and what truths may exist beyond such a construct.

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Blue Curry (b. 1974, Nassau, The Bahamas) lives and works in London, UK. He is the director of Ruby Cruel, a creative space in Hackney, London, and he holds an MFA from Goldsmiths, London. Curry participated in the 15th edition of Documenta, Kassel, Germany (2022), and was included in *Life Between Islands: Caribbean-British Art 1950s-Now*, travelling from Tate Britain (2021-22) to the Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada (2023-24). In January 2024 Curry will also exhibit in *Trópico es Político: Caribbean Art Under the Visitor Economy Regime*, curated by Marina Reyes Franco, at Amhurst College, MA, travelling from the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *Leisure Aesthetics, Rejecting Exoticism, Part of Caribbean Art Today: Visualising Evolving Identities*, V&A Academy, Online (2022); TERN Gallery, Nassau, Bahamas (2022); MOCA London Web Exhibitions, Online (2020); *55 Gallon BBQ*, The Empire Remains Shop, Grand Union, Birmingham, UK (2019); *Foreign Matter*, SCAN, London (2019); and *Designer Exotics*, AIR, Copenhagen, Denmark (2018). Residencies include AIR Artist in Residence, Copenhagen, Denmark; Perez Art Museum, Miami FL; Centro León Residency, Santiago, Dominican Republic; PEER Residency, London; LoBe Residency, Germany; and Omi International Artists Residency, NY, amongst others.