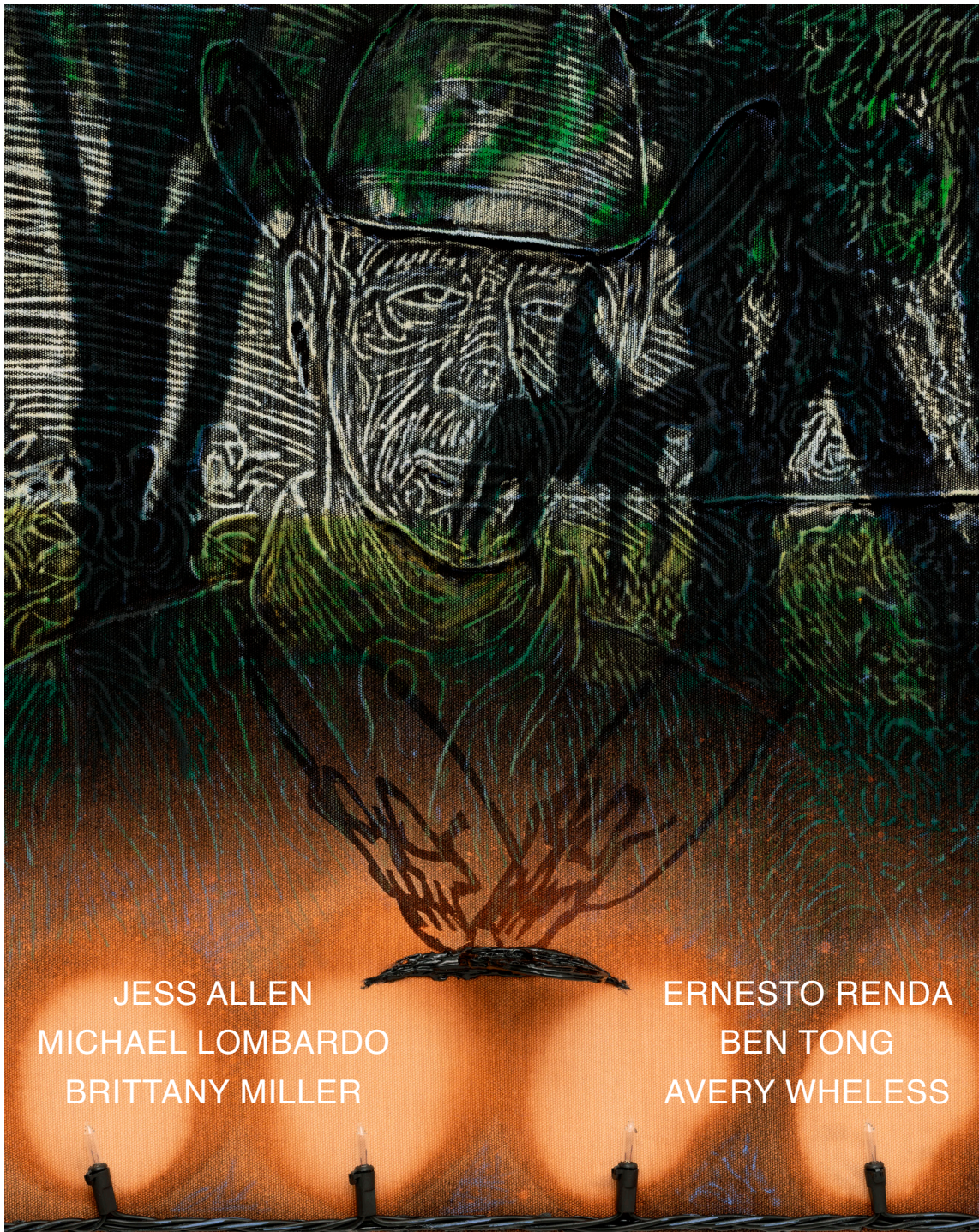


**G/ART/EN
Gallery**

GROUP

MOHS

15 JUNE - 27 JULY 2023



JESS ALLEN
MICHAEL LOMBARDO
BRITTANY MILLER

ERNESTO RENDA
BEN TONG
AVERY WHELESS

UNTOLD STORIES

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Group Show

15 June - 27 July 2023

The gallery is pleased to present a summer group show including works by: Jess Allen, Michael Lombardo, Brittany Miller, Ernesto Renda, Ben Tong and Avery Wheless.

In a wide range of techniques and languages, all the paintings on display works like fragments of narratives. Similarly to the frame of a movie, the whole story can be imagined starting from there. Sometimes the clue that suggest the untold narrative is an interior scenography, sometimes a cloth or a shadow.

This is the case of **Jess Allen**, UK based artist. Her whole narrative is *in absentia*. The presence of figures is just suggested by their own shadows projected on domestic objects, such as couches or sofas. These shadows do not express though a sense of lack, but on the contrary they suggest a sense of intimacy to whom everyone can relate to, with engagement and no voyeurism. In her recent interview published on *Revue Eclipse*, the artist better explain this concept as follow:

"Recently I discovered the Japanese term 'Ma', which is a term used to describe a very important part of their cultural aesthetic. In the essay 'When Less is more: Japanese Concept of MA, Minimalism and Beyond', Yukiko Kasaki describes Ma as 'an emptiness full of possibilities, like a promise yet to be fulfilled', and 'the silence between the notes which make the music.' Equally important in their architecture, space/ Ma, is significant as a place to pause. This concept is much more than a physical phenomena, but a philosophy of being, and a metaphor for existence."

Also in the work of **Brittany Miller**, american painter based in NYC, the viewer has access to the intimacy of the subjects laying on sofas or beds. These are safe places, refuges from the world where no defences or masks are needed. In the painting *"Any fool can get into an Ocean"* for example, the artist is using a recurrent motif referencing to medieval illuminated manuscripts that are telling the story of the End of the World in Revelations. The empty boat floating at night references a safe space, a savior, within the precarious and unknown ocean. The boat is the same idea as the way that she's using the bed as a symbol of a womb/comforting and protective space. Building her paintings through a repetitive gestures of lines, those images appear like dreams themselves. The use of curtains in the background also suggest the idea of a stage in a theater, where a monologue or a piece is about to happen.

Michael Lombardo's untold stories start instead from objects and clothes that he finds and collects. Being a LA based artist and studio assistant of Ed Ruscha, Michael has a strong photographic approach in his paintings - building up his compositions

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from real objects and representing them like instant polaroids.

"Shirt with Citrus" takes inspiration indeed from a shirt belonged to the artist's grandfather, that he photographed together with a Citrus - immediately bringing us to a family atmosphere. *"Satin shirt with Rose Rock"* takes inspiration instead from a found country shirt paired with a Rose Rock collected in the desert of Oklahoma where he grew up. The artist offers us all the clues we need to build up a new story. Interestingly, Lombardo spends time working up his surfaces, adding in unconventional materials like collected wood scraps from building his strainers from red oak that in a way charge the finished paintings with a sense of time and place. Lombardo adds these materials to almost act as an obstacle to finish a picture. Distorting the imagery to add a sense of dissonance and distance, like the way a memory can become unclear over time.

A timeless instant is then the result. Like a scene frozen in the eternity. This same suspended time is what we feel in **Avery Wheless'** work. Her narrative is not about what is happening, but what these girls are feeling or thinking in this specific frozen moment instead. The whole narrative begins and ends with the female's bodies, they are their own entire reality. As a result in the composition, the bodies overtake the space of the canvas. They inhabit it like dancers take control of the space they move into. As a previous dancer herself indeed, Avery put a focus on the body and the shapes it takes - like in the painting *"Float between"*, where the body occupy the full diagonal of the canvas. The artist works with expressionist bold brushstrokes that recall the physical energy of the bodies, well balanced with a delicate white line overlapping on top, like a tulle skirt.

Textured and rough brushstrokes are also the hallmark of the work by LA based artist **Ben Tong**. His untold stories starts from interiors of architecture or landscapes - like perfect scenographies for an Hollywood's movie set. The approach of his paintings is very photographic: both in the cut of the composition representing a space built by few elements but also in the blurred effect of the final image. It looks like a photography shot with an over exposed time, resulting as a blurred and moved pic.

Like for Ernesto Renda, light and time are connected also in Ben's work: the image looks suspended not in a frozen timeframe but instead moving in an endless time machine through parallel realities. Colors and shapes are melting and crashing, suggesting a new perspective of our own reality and opening up to new ones.

Talking about a physical image, **Ernesto Renda** is the master. The NY based artist literally takes inspiration from films or documentaries and he builds up his works from those frames by using found objects and a tridimensional relief made with wax or hot glue.

"Through my painting and drawing practice, I try to explore what bearing film and moving-image media have on visual culture and contemporary modes of witnessing," Ernesto said about his work. "Since 2017, I have focused on the frottage (rubbing) technique as a material encounter between two flat images. My works begin with

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an underlying resin relief, an extruded line drawing. After laying canvas over it, this relief is hidden or erased, but then 're-surfaces' through friction in the wax and oil pastel drawing over the canvas. The two drawings are either based on appropriated stills, which appear in sequence in the source material, or they are drawn from my own imagination—acting as storyboards for a film that has not yet been produced. By locking the two layers in the same pictorial space, I can begin to grasp the anti-matter of film editing. The cinematic theory of montage holds that the meaning of film is synthesized in the space between two shots. Rather than reproducing the seductive singularity of a film still, my works attempt to hone in on that elusive synthesis, allowing the viewer to take baby steps forward and backward in screen-time”.

With his work, he shapes a tridimensional image - bringing it out of the screen. Both of the two works created for the show reference sequences from documentaries: one about bull farming and one about global capitalism and its implications for human rights and the environment. In these new works, the artist is experimenting with bleaching the black canvas and using stencils to create trompe l'oeil situations of illumination and shadow on the surface. These fantasy lights interfere with the colder images around them, and make them inscrutable in certain areas. The artist thinks of this as the light of the present always interfering with the light of memory.

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