



LIKE WATERMELON FOR CHOCOLATE



UNREPD

619 N. Western Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90004 | UNREPD.COM

**OPENING RECEPTION:
JUNE 19, 2022 (JUNETEENTH)**
On view from June 20th – July 20th, 2022



(Los Angeles, CA) -- UNREPD is pleased to announce *Like Watermelon for Chocolate*, a solo presentation by artist Kirk Henriques, featuring a selection of abstract and figurative paintings in oil and acrylic on fiberglass mesh. Opening on Juneteenth, or Black Independence Day, a holiday commemorating the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States, the exhibition will be on view through July 20, 2022.

At the center of this body of work is the watermelon, an icon ripe with socio-economic significance. The exhibition considers watermelon's fraught history as a symbol of freedom and prosperity, as well as denigration and shame, for black people in America. After the Civil War, black people grew and sold watermelon as a way to support themselves in their newly-established independence. Because their success was threatening to the Southern social order, white people quickly stigmatized watermelon as a symbol of black laziness, uncleanness, and childishness; this stigma persists through present day. In his paintings, Henriques seeks to reclaim the watermelon as an uplifting symbol of black independence across various contexts. *Like Watermelon for Chocolate*, then, is a meditation on the possibilities of freedom for black people.

Inspired by Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, the exhibition situates watermelon in a familial framework. In mining the depths of emotion based in personal spaces and experiences, the exhibition begins to take the shape of a black American telenovela. Dramatic and poignant, Henriques's paintings incorporate movement both literally and figuratively, leading viewers through the amalgam of signification within each piece; the paintings' layered surfaces repeat materially the histories they represent. Henriques's formal interests therefore echo his narrative and, despite their historical bases, concern themselves with futurity. The exhibition tells the story of an abstract idea of American life, one in which black independence is a self-evident truth. If we begin from a place of black freedom, the paintings posit, "American life" begins to look like black joy, black love, and black peace. That is to say that if black independence is the soil, the fruit it grows tastes as sweet as watermelon.

Kirk Henriques was born in Brooklyn, New York to Jamaican parents. He received his MFA from Cornell University in 2021. Henriques explores both figuration and abstraction; he is interested in spatiality and visibility as they apply to black people. His process-driven paintings and mixed media works foreground the circumstances of their making, such that the formal and conceptual aspects of his work hold equal weight. Henriques utilizes nontraditional materials, including fiberglass mesh in lieu of stretched canvas, and repurposes traditional materials—painting with paint skins, for example—as a way to make space for himself as an artist within and beyond Eurocentric models. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Charles Moffatt Gallery and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, and in numerous group exhibitions. He was a finalist for the AXA Art Prize. Henriques lives and works between New York and Georgia.

UNREPD is a contemporary art gallery in Melrose Hill, Los Angeles. Featuring emerging and mid-career BIPOC, women, and non-binary artists, UNREPD removes barriers of entry for artists and collectors alike. Founded by two women of color, Dr. Sarah Mantilla Griffin and Tricia Benitez Beanum, UNREPD presents fine art in a designed environment.

For further information, please contact hello@unrepd.com



Juneteenth, 2022
48 x 48 inches
oil, acrylic, and acrylic skins on fiberglass mesh
\$7500



Watermelon No. 1 (The Juice worth the squeeze), 2022
97 x 72 inches
acrylic and oil on fiberglass mesh
\$16,500



Watermelon No. 2 (Against the rind), 2022
72 x 56 inches
acrylic and enamel on fiberglass mesh
\$9,500



Sandiita, 2022
50 x 72 inches
oil and acrylic on fiberglass mesh
\$9,800



Watermelon No. 3 (It's All Gucci), 2022
82 1/2 x 57 1/2 inches
acrylic and enamel on fiberglass mesh
\$10,500



Deflecting praise, 2022
72 x 56 inches
oil, acrylic, and metallic cardstock on fiberglass mesh
\$9,800



Watermelon No. 4 (Chocolate drizzle), 2022
55 x 53 1/2 inches
acrylic on fiberglass mesh
\$8,500



Watermelon No. 5 (Chocolate drip), 2022
62 x 53 inches
acrylic on fiberglass mesh
\$7,800



A bosom of fire, 2022
62 x 62 inches
oil, acrylic skins, and hair product labels on fiberglass mesh
\$8,500



Watermelon No. 6 (Pitts), 2022
73 x 60 inches
acrylic on fiberglass mesh
\$9,500



Watermelon No. 7 (Garvey), 2022
81 1/2 x 62 inches
acrylic on fiberglass mesh
\$10,500



By The Fruits, 2022
40 x 40 inches
oil and acrylic on fiberglass mesh
\$6500



The Wedding, 2022
36 x 36 inches
oil and acrylic on fiberglass mesh
\$6500



2 Esdras, 2022
96 x 72 inches
oil and acrylic on fiberglass mesh
\$16,500



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