

*Art Basel Paris*  
Nikita Gale  
Daiga Grantina  
& Leslie Martinez

Emalin & Commonwealth and Council  
16 – 20 October 2024

Emalin & Commonwealth and Council are pleased to present a joint stand at Art Basel Paris with works by Nikita Gale (represented jointly by Emalin & Commonwealth and Council), Daiga Grantina (represented by Emalin) and Leslie Martinez (represented by Commonwealth and Council). The presentation brings together three artists who use strategies of recycling, folding, binding, hardening, suspending and layering to renegotiate what is understood as familiar in our visual and material culture.

Using commonplace materials such as cloths, rags, foam, wood or metal drawn from industrial and domestic contexts, they touch on often conflated familial and societal memories to unveil and disrupt gendered and racialised connotations. Each builds a distinct material vocabulary – a set of textural gestures and forms that reappear across their works – that probes everyday objects with an attention to residue and accumulation, asking questions about our sense of belonging.

Nikita Gale uses the encounter of sound, light and raw physical material to stage environments that consider the role of audiences, the politics of looking and being looked at, and timescales of attention. A former student of archaeology interested in the vestiges of the commercialised and racialised industries of culture, Gale orbits themes of (in)visibility and audibility – particularly in relationship to marginalised bodies – interrogating the unstable relationship between performer and spectator, structure and ruin.

Gale's *HXSTXRICAL RECORD* (2022) consists of darting spotlights, synthesisers and minerals scattered across metal bleachers. Technology – the heads of spotlights, the quickness of their attention, the whirring of their control modules – often stands in for the human body in Gale's practice. Here, a phantom society is suggested in sets of material symbols: the spotlights of our sensory attention, the calcite of our bones and teeth, the aluminium and polycarbonate of our entertainment industry.

*FIXED LOOPS* (2019) comprise Gale's wall-based sculptures made with steel structures, concrete-soaked cloth and polyurethane foam. The monochromatic compositions, calcified to defy gravity, document the artist's performances of movement around the structure that unfold over days of cyclically manipulating their direction, their tightness, their malleability and hardness. Gale processes the possibility of recording change and sensory attention in material, accruing over a steel structure drawn from public spaces of exit and ruin – an industrial ladder that falls and ascends at the same time.

Daiga Grantina's assemblages range from the intimate to sprawling spatial installations. Composed of domestic and unassuming materials – fabric, wood, resin, ink and wax – the Latvian-born, Paris-based artist engages materiality as a starting point for her investigations into perception and language. By questioning not only how we see and experience but also what we see, Grantina's flowing forms, pastel hues and weightless materials poke at gendered stereotypes within abstraction – interrogating what is perceived as intimate.

Grantina's new sculptural series extends vertically on the wall, mimicking the physical and spiritual presence of people, tall and searching outwards. She choreographs the sculptures as their own biospheres, complete in their forms – at times opening up to us and at others closing inwards. While driven by her interest in the interplay between granular experiences and a sense of an immense unknowability, Grantina's works are foremost formal investigations. Accumulated into assemblages of hollow, hanging, resting forms, they unfold as process-driven thought experiments on the particularity and magnitude of sensorial experience.

The colour palette of Leslie Martinez's large-scale paintings is based on the CMYK colour model – acutely focused and at the same time cosmic in its affect. Martinez's canvases of pooled paint draw on the indigenous ancestry of craft on the one hand and the formal legacies of abstraction on the other. This embodied way of painting resists colonial notions of taste and instead embraces the queer and decolonial concept of *rasquachismo* – a term from Chicano cultural study, describing a resourcefulness embraced out of necessity.

Both alluring and abject, the paintings incorporate remains and cast-offs from the studio, including rags, dried acrylics, crushed rock and sawdust. Transforming discarded objects into immersive compositions, Martinez's paintings are engaged with the structural similarities between trans identity and the border – a queer transcendence embodied in the tactile, abstract form in perpetual striving toward the eradication of tension between real and desired depths.

Through the affective power of scale, world-building, and material tactility in their mediums, the artists consider the viewer's senses implicated in abstraction and history. Politics seep out of their forms and methods as materials find new ways to split and harden – positioning us within the geological scales of time.

**Nikita Gale** (b. 1983 Anchorage, US) lives and works in Los Angeles, US. Gale graduated with a BA Anthropology from Yale University, New Haven, US in 2006 and completed an MFA at University of California, Los Angeles, US in 2016. Recent solo exhibitions have been held at Nest Ruimte, The Hague, NL (2024); Petzel, New York, US (2024); Emalin, London (2023); Reyes Finn, Detroit, US (2023); Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles, US (2022); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2022); LAXART, Los Angeles, US (2022); 52 Walker, New York, US (2022); Anchorage Museum, US (2021); California African American Museum, Los Angeles, US (2020); MoMA PS1, Long Island City, US (2020); and Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, US (2018).

Gale's work has been included in group exhibitions held at Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum, New York, US (2024); Tate Modern, London (2024); Taipei Biennial, TW (2023); Performa Biennial, New York, US (2023); ICA Philadelphia, US (2023); Emalin, London (2022 and 2021); Swiss Institute, New York, US (2022); Oxygen Biennial, Tblisi, GE (2021); Kunstraum Kreuzberg, Berlin, DE (2021); Nottingham Contemporary, UK (2020); Moderna Museet, Stockholm, SE (2019); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, US (2018); and The Studio Museum Harlem, New York, US (2017).

**Daiga Grantina** (b. 1985, Saldus, Latvia) lives and works in Paris, France. She studied at the HFBK University of Fine Arts Hamburg and the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Recent and upcoming solo exhibitions include Kunstmuseum Bern, CH (upcoming 2025); Kunstmuseum Appenzell, CH (upcoming 2024); MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique, Paris, FR (upcoming 2024); Foksal Gallery Foundation, Warsaw, PL (2024); Z33, Hasselt, BE (2024); Art Museum Riga Bourse, LV (2022); GAMeC, Bergamo, IT (2021); Emalin, London (2021); New Museum, New York, US (2020); the Latvian Pavilion, 58th Venice Biennale, IT (2019); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2018); Kunstverein in Hamburg, DE (2017) and Kim? Contemporary Art Center, Riga, LV (2016).

Grantina's work has been included in group exhibitions at Kim? Contemporary Art Center, Riga, LV (2023); the 11th Sequences Biennial, Reykjavík, IS (2023); Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, UK (2023); Kunstverein Göttingen, Göttingen, DE (2023); Latvian Museum of Art, Riga, LV (2023) X Museum, Beijing, CN (2022); National Gallery Prague, CZ (2022); Kunstmuseum Bern, CH (2020); Museum of Contemporary Art Busan, KR (2020); Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius, LT (2018); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, FR (2018); Musée d'Orsay, Paris, FR (2018); Kunsthalle Mainz, DE (2017) and Bergen Kunsthall, NO (2016).

**Leslie Martinez** (b. 1985, McAllen; lives and works in Dallas) received an MFA from Yale University (2018) and a BFA from The Cooper Union (2008). Solo exhibitions have been held at MoMA PS1, Queens (2023); Commonwealth and Council, Los Angeles (2023); Blaffer Art Museum, Houston (2023); and And Now, Dallas (2024, 2021, 2020).

Selected group exhibitions have been held at Chapter NY (2024); Project Native Informant, London (2024); Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (2023); Lehmann Maupin, New York (2022); Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (2021); and The Latinx Project, New York University (2020). Martinez has participated in residencies at Denniston Hill, Woodbridge (2023); Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Dallas (2020); and Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson (2019). Martinez is a recipient of Latinx Arts Fellowship, Mellon Foundation (2022).