

Jesús Hilario-Reyes
Waywardly In Low Tide

28 July - 12 August
Curated by Ben Broome
FRIEZE, No.9 Cork Street

Presented at Frieze, No.9 Cork Street and curated by Ben Broome, *Waywardly In Low Tide* exhibits a series of sculptural works by Puerto-Rican and Dominican artist Jesús Hilario-Reyes. Utilising sound installation, cement, metal, salt, and dehydrated hog bladders, this new body of work pulls from the artist's ongoing exploration of fugitivity through the modes of queer nightlife, the carnival, and *destierro* (an untranslatable Spanish term akin to "being torn from the land").

Waywardly In Low Tide employs motifs of the mangrove, the hurricane, and the carnival towards notions of both black and queer fugitivity. In this body of work, Hilario-Reyes argues that the fugitive, and by extension the migrant condition, must be mobile and fluid; embodying many spaces in order to persist.

Organic in appearance, the metal elements of the sculptures pull their form from the mangrove forests of Puerto Rico, where networked roots protect the archipelago from the effects of annual hurricanes. The artist identifies an entanglement between the mangrove tree and the fugitive condition, with adaptability and transformative capacity integral to the survival of both mangrove and migrant. As Alexandra T. Vazquez writes in her 2014 essay for the American Quarterly *Learning to Live in Miami*:

By 'mangrove aesthetics' I mean to contribute to a Caribbean actuality and poetic and conjure a creative ecosystem that holds land together. [...] And even though mangroves filter the flotsam of the continents, they must thrive in spite of their littering. No matter what is done to them, they still grow up and out into mineral-rich, mangled structures that carry the smells and sounds of antiquity and futurity.

The hurricane – a blurred centrifuge revolving around a still nucleus – is a common motif in Hilario-Reyes' work and research. Its erosive power is reflected in the weathering of these sculptures by the artist's hand, the scraped metal considered as adornment, or "the process of making different." Bouquets of inflated hog-bladders, traditionally used as percussive instruments to ward off evil spirits, furnish the metal rods. They also appear at carnivals across the Caribbean, where they become harmless batons with which to hit fellow carnival goers. Engaging the apotropaic and playful potentiality of the bladders and the opposing spaces in which they're used, Hilario-Reyes has embossed them with hosiery, fishnets and fetish wear: a further adornment which pays homage to the transient nature of queer nightlife.

The sonic installation accompanying *Waywardly in Low Tide* solidifies the link to the club space, the fugitive, and the spiritual. Composed by Yesenia Rojas, the soundtrack incorporates the hog-bladders as instruments, the cry of an Osprey (which signals a hurricane's approach) and the 1992 club classic 'Give Your Body' by Random XS in which the repeating lyric "give your body" – both devotional and instructional in nature – conjures the corporeal submission synonymous with the queer club space and the condition of migrant fugitivity.

In *Waywardly in Low Tide*, Hilario-Reyes constructs a shrine to the fugitive, the migrant, and the raver – acknowledging the common transience of each of these positions and attempting to find "sovereignty for the drifting body."

Currently based in Brooklyn, New York, Jesús Hilario-Reyes (b. 1996, San Juan, Puerto Rico) is an interdisciplinary artist with a Bachelor's in Fine Arts Studio from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Recently a recipient of the Leslie Lohman Museum Fellowship, the Lighthouse Works Fellowship (2022) and the Bemis Center Residency (2022) program. Jesús Hilario-Reyes has exhibited/screened/performed most notably at e-Flux (NYC), Gladstone Gallery (NYC), The Kitchen (NYC), Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Black Star Film Festival (Philadelphia, PA), Mana Contemporary (Chicago, IL), Real Art Ways (Hartford, CT), Rudimento (Quito, ECUA) and Parasol Unit (London, UK).