

EXHIBITION FEATURING THE WORK OF SEVEN EMERGING ARTISTS WHO CHALLENGE THE BOUNDARIES OF FIGURATIVE ART

New works in painting, sculpture, and installation by Sula Bermúdez-Silverman, Sasha Gordon, Sara Issakharian, Chella Man, Ilana Savdie, Austin Martin White, and Rosha Yaghmai

***Overflow, Afterglow: New Work in Chromatic Figuration*
May 24, 2024 – September 15, 2024**

New York, NY, May 9, 2024—The Jewish Museum presents *Overflow, Afterglow: New Work in Chromatic Figuration*, on view from May 24 through September 15, 2024. New works in painting, sculpture, and installation by Sula Bermúdez-Silverman, Sasha Gordon, Sara Issakharian, Chella Man, Ilana Savdie, Austin Martin White, and Rosha Yaghmai explore how supernatural color and uncanny luminescence challenge the boundaries of traditional figuration. The exhibition highlights the figure's malleability and continual metamorphosis, expressing the lived experiences of a multiethnic, multiracial, and otherwise multifaceted group of makers.

Overflow, Afterglow brings together seven young artists who use color to distort the figure and expand cultural norms—whether nodding to pop culture and digital immersion, the vibrancies of their heritages, or spaces of youthful and queer liberation. Responding to the social and political turmoil of the past decade and absorbing input from different backgrounds and histories, these artists articulate new visual vocabularies. The exhibition also builds upon the Jewish Museum's ongoing practice of exploring contemporary art in real time, providing a platform for each new generation of artists.

The exhibition design for *Overflow, Afterglow* offers a non-hierarchical experience of the works on view. Each artist presents new and recent work within their own installation space, providing a portal into their individual but connected worlds. About half of the works on view have been newly created for this exhibition.

Sula Bermúdez-Silverman

Born in 1993, New York City; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA
Bermúdez-Silverman infuses her sculptures with shape-shifting luminosity that radiates beyond their outermost edges. She arrives at her sculptures through rigorous research, exploring postcolonial

legacies and tracing the ways they continue to mold contemporary realities. Bermúdez-Silverman starts with an intense interest in the cultural narratives of materials. She often chooses commodities such as sugar and minerals that have a deep relationship to the history of European colonialism. The complex matrix of materials and embodied histories held together in her work juxtaposes elements that are both familiar and eerie, producing a jarring effect.

In *Repository I: Mother* (2021), a ghostly translucent house molded from the artist's childhood dollhouse is cast from colored sugar. Its glowing pink surface illuminates the sinister ways that gender silently operates in domestic environments and our everyday lives. Recent explorations include the appropriation of Chinese decorative forms in European Chinoiserie furniture (*Heliades*, 2024) and the eerie fluorescence of uranium glass, which contains materials that are commonly mined from indigenous lands (*Leetso I*, 2023).

Sasha Gordon

Born in 1998, Somers, NY; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Sasha Gordon's surreal dreamscapes are bold representations of the artist's multifaceted self, populated with her doppelgängers. Their skin tones are often imbued with color to emphasize intense emotional states through electric palettes. Gordon's compositions visualize an inner monologue expressing her fraught experience growing up in a predominantly white suburb as a queer Korean Jewish American. In recent works, Gordon expresses her defiant strength and transfixing power as an artist through the off-center gaze of her confident figures. In these lush, prismatic, and world-building compositions, they unabashedly take up space and seek out pleasure, making magic out of the mundane.

Her new self-portrait, *Head Count* (2024), refracts in a dynamic composition that is rendered in intricate detail via two perspectives. The artist's body is further entangled with that of her partner's in an intimate and meticulously choreographed love scene. Palette is key to the allure of Gordon's everyday yet extraordinary scenes; in this case the pink and crimson flesh seem to radiate heat.

Sara Issakharian

Born in 1983, Tehran, Iran; lives and works in Los Angeles, Berlin, and Tehran

In Sara Issakharian's paintings, violence and mysticism go hand in hand. She depicts atrocious events of our time allegorically, casting anthropomorphic figures in epic scenes of mythological struggle. Among her themes are state-sanctioned violence and the oppression



of women in her native Iran, the enduring trauma of war, and the push and pull of emigration. Issakharian works through these painful subjects with a language of forms and figures rendered in both delicate, gentle strokes and bold, propulsive marks of charcoal and pastel. In her monumentally scaled works, clandestine activity, disruption, and apprehensive tranquility all coexist in a dynamic interplay.

Issakharian's practice is an intensely personal engagement with her own cultural heritage as an immigrant of Iranian Jewish origin. The work *And every moment a whole summer* (2024) is awash in chromatic and compositional chaos: the figures, drawn from eclectic cultural references, are massed together and detached from their original contexts. She scrambles together characters from Disney films and ancient origin myths, figurines related to classical sculpture, and forest animals drawn from Persian miniatures. In the resulting nebulous pastel cloud, there is a sense of placelessness, unease, and uncertainty, as the figures appear to flee an invisible, timeless force.

Chella Man

Born in 1998, Hershey, PA; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

The notion of identity existing on continuums that cut through the confines of binaries is central to Chella Man's practice. Myriad and fluid conceptions of the self inform their painting, sculpture, writing, performance, film, and advocacy work, all of which draw from Man's own lived experience as Deaf, transmasculine, genderqueer, Chinese, and Jewish. Man's practice is a reclamation and celebration of these inherent multiplicities.

Their most ambitious performance and installation to date, *Autonomy*, provides an intimate encounter with a clone of their nude body bathed in warm golden-hour light. In a performance co-presented by the Jewish Museum and Performance Space on May 2, 2024, Man painstakingly and lovingly recreated the scars and tattoos that grace their body on the silicone clone, memorializing their long journey of gender transition and exercising autonomy over their own body. The result of this performance is presented in installation form in *Overflow, Afterglow*. *Autonomy* does not center trauma, struggle, discrimination, or exclusion (though not for lack of such experiences), and instead foregrounds resilience, remembrance, curiosity, and care—for the self, for others, for family, and chosen families. Man emphasizes joy and rest as defenses against the unsettling backdrop of gender politics in the U.S. and beyond, presenting their body cradled by the afterglow of transformation.



Ilana Savdie

Born in 1986, Miami, FL; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Through chromatic saturation and density of imagery, Ilana Savdie embraces abundance as a strategy to subvert figuration. Her signature palette combines luminous fluorescent colors with the shocking contrast of deep, rich hues. Although Savdie's works center on the body, and her canvases contend with figures, they put forth only phantom fragments of realism. Glimpses of torsos and limbs are drenched in sweeping flows of leaky paint, broad-brushed gleaming color, and dimpled, skin-like textures created with wax. Inherited familial legacies of the Jewish diaspora are also at play in her work, guiding her exploration of placelessness; Savdie's family came from Egypt, Lebanon, Romania, Poland, and Venezuela, arriving in Colombia as the result of numerous conflicts and expulsions. Drawing on such upheaval and cultural fluidity, she is able to balance multiple contexts and traditions. Savdie leverages an enveloping scale and dynamic, gestural forms, inviting the viewer to examine intricate details from a state of near disorientation.

A particular interest in Savdie's new body of work are the dynamics between predator and prey, autonomy and forced dependence—emblems not only of hierarchical power structures but also interconnected relationships. The painting *A carrot laced with cyanide* (2024) broaches the perverse human desire to tame the animal world, despite its sublime grandeur. The work departs from an image of a circus ringmaster forcing an elephant to bow at the close of a performance. The stacked forms indicate the power of a larger body, which is subjected to the trauma of being controlled and sensationalized, exposing the sinister underbelly of spectacle. Savdie's painting *Cow* (2023), in the Jewish Museum collection, is also a part of the installation.

Austin Martin White

Born 1984, Detroit, MI; lives and works in Philadelphia, PA

In Austin Martin White's work, paint oozes out from the surface of the picture plane, escaping its limits. Layers of dense and vibrant color push through and spill over the contours of the figures. The artist draws from a range of colonial-era art historical and ethnographic sources to probe the way their power dynamics are perpetuated in the contemporary moment. He first alters his reference images via hand drawing and digital tools before rendering fragments of them using a repurposed vinyl-cutting machine to generate negative images, similar to printmaking techniques. White then pushes his signature mixture of liquid rubber and pigment



through the back of his substrate, a process of manual extrusion which creates a vibrant relief. The resulting compositions are textured and topographical, matte and glossy, brightly colored and darkly shadowed, and at points, glowing. Their seepages of color and light emphasize amorphous shapes over any crisp lines to create figures. White's process renders his source materials nearly unrecognizable, effectively removing any fixed idea or definition that the original images conveyed.

The painting *runawaydaddy* (2024) incorporates elements of figures from the influential mid-20th century painter Bob Thompson's work as well as ethnographic imagery. Like Thompson, White refutes realist representation in favor of planes of vibrant color that only loosely nod to figuration. He draws focus to the way the picture plane is made through his excessive use of paint, imbuing the surface with texture. Pigment seems to crawl out of his figures, exposing the materiality of his artwork. This work reminds the viewer that artistic forms are always a construction of human hands and imagination, and a product of its maker's political interests.

Rosha Yaghmai

Born in 1978, Santa Monica, CA; lives and works in Los Angeles, CA

Rosha Yaghmai's *Afterimage* series pushes figuration to its most far-flung possibilities, harnessing layers of pure color to evoke the aura of figures she intentionally removes from her compositions. These works address notions of inheritance and collective memory that are absorbed through the body but become abstracted through generations and over great geographical distances. The blurred swaths of color connect to images that emerge when we stare directly into a bright light and overstimulate our retinas. An inverted, residual copy imprints on our field of vision, unmoored from the physical world. Such afterimages are the direct apparition of what is happening inside the body.

To create her *Afterimage* series, Yaghmai airbrushes blurry contours and pockets of color onto single layers of fabric. The compositions loosely interpret residual images that have stuck in her mind from past-life visualizations; they are also related to reproductions of historical Persian miniature paintings, from which she digitally removes the figures. These traditional works decorated her childhood home in California in homage to Iran, her father's homeland, where the artist was conceived but has never visited. The artist arranges layers of painted, translucent fabric, one on top of the other, creating shimmering new compositions that bear only traces of their source material.



ORGANIZATION

Overflow, Afterglow: New Work in Chromatic Figuration is organized by Liz Munsell, Barnett & Annalee Newman Curator of Contemporary Art, The Jewish Museum, and Kristina Parsons, Leon Levy Assistant Curator, The Jewish Museum. The exhibition was designed by Chelsea Garunay.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue, designed by Common Name, includes an essay by Liz Munsell, texts on each artist by Kristina Parsons, interviews with the artists, and photography by Mary Kang and Abby Ross. Co-published by the Jewish Museum and Yale University Press, the book will be available worldwide and from the Jewish Museum Shop for \$35. Available in August 2024.

PROGRAMS

On [Thursday, May 23, 2024, at 6:30pm](#) artists Sula Bermúdez-Silverman, Sara Issakharian, and Rosha Yaghmai discuss their work in a gallery talk with curators Liz Munsell and Kristina Parsons. Gallery conversations with the other artists in the exhibition will take place in June, dates forthcoming. ASL interpretation will be provided at all evening gallery talks.

AUDIO TOUR

Accompanying the exhibition is a collection of interpretive material available within the Jewish Museum's digital guide on Bloomberg Connects, the free arts and culture app. The general audio tour features curators Liz Munsell and Kristina Parsons along with many of the artists in the exhibition. A verbal description guide for visitors who are blind or have low vision and a suite of videos about each artist in ASL is being produced and will be released shortly after the exhibition opens. All materials will include captions or transcription and will also be available on the Museum's website. Bloomberg Connects is accessible for either onsite or offsite visits and can be downloaded to any mobile device. [Download the free app.](#)

SUPPORT

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About the Jewish Museum

The Jewish Museum is an art museum committed to illuminating the complexity and vibrancy of Jewish culture for a global audience. Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, in the landmarked Warburg mansion, the Jewish Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is one of the oldest Jewish museums in the world. The Museum offers diverse exhibitions and programs and maintains a unique collection of nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, and media reflecting the global Jewish experience over more than 4,000 years. The public may call 212.423.3200 or visit TheJewishMuseum.org for more information.

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