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Yatika Starr Fields: Fear Not



Untitled (Extraction), 2021, oil on canvas, 78 x 106 inches

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to announce *Yatika Starr Fields: Fear Not*, an exhibition of sculptures and paintings by Yatika Fields. Opening on Thursday, January 27, 2022, the exhibition is the artist's first at Garth Greenan Gallery.

Mingling oil and spray paint, Fields surveys urban and political landscapes, exploring their potent symbolism and metaphorical content. In one painting, an abstracted oil pump's jack and drill bits churn through a murky green and black landscape. Working through personal and societal struggle, Fields created many of the works in *Fear Not* during the pandemic—with each mark on the canvas forming an attempt to commune and persevere with the collective through unprecedented times.

In each work, movement and color channel story and ceremony. In the *Osage Shield* series, for example, the artist reframes the Oklahoma flag's symbolic grouping of the buffalo hide shield, peace pipe, and European olive branch as, at best, a self-protective fiction and, at worst, a deliberate attempt to obscure a darker reality. In one work of the series, the

shield is converted from the flag's flat abstraction into a three-dimensional orb, surreally hovering above the Oklahoma landscape. The original designer of Oklahoma's flag expropriated the Osage shield—a sacred object used both in battle and spiritual practice—transforming it into a symbol of “defense of the state.” Even more perversely, the Oklahoma flag was wielded by one of the first to breach the Capitol on the sixth of January. Fields returns the expropriation, encircling the Osage peace pipe with a protective wrapping of barbed wire. The artist renders the pipe in vivid detail, restoring it to its traditional form. Oklahoma's crepuscular landscape is dotted with the glittering lights of cars, trucks, homes, and businesses—reminders of the instrumental conversion of earth into property and resource. Power lines traverse the scenery, stretching between posts marking territorial expansion.

Personal and social struggle have long been integral to the artist's practice. After joining the Water Protectors at the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016, Fields increasingly centered the Indigenous history of hope and struggle in his work, particularly in his studio practice. In his 2017 series, *Tent Metaphor Standing Rock*, Field recovered tents after the infamous February 22, 2017 police raid on the protesters. The artist recombined the vivid tenting material—the mainstay of middle-class camping holidays that has become an icon of homelessness and protest movements—into traditional Indigenous patterns, anti-pipeline slogans, and into dynamic, compelling abstract compositions. As in his graffiti works, Fields blurs the line between abstraction and representation, creating stylistic compositions out of recognizable elements, and setting them against dynamic, swirling fields of color and twisting forms. The works blur the boundaries between political polemic and abstraction, between distress, resistance and hope.

Born in 1980 in Tulsa, Yatika Fields is a member of the Cherokee, Mvskoke (Creek), and Osage Nations. Fields studied landscape painting at the University of Oklahoma's Sienna, Italy summer program before enrolling at the Art Institute of Boston from 2001 to 2004. While living on the East Coast, Fields developed a keen interest in street art. His dynamic, vibrant graffiti works quickly attracted attention, generating public and private mural commissions in Portland, Oklahoma City, Phoenix, Santa Fe, Bentonville and Siloam Springs, and Urique, CHIH, Mexico.

Fields has participated in more than 40 solo and group exhibitions at venues across the United States and Europe, including: the Southern Plains Indian Museum (2008, Anadarko, Oklahoma); Chiaroscuro Contemporary (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, Santa Fe); BlueRain Gallery (2015, 2016, 2018, Santa Fe); Peabody Essex Museum, (2015–2016, Salem, MA); Rainmaker Gallery (2017, Bristol, UK); the Grand Palais (2018, Paris); Philbrook Museum of Art (2018, Tulsa); Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Bentonville, 2019); Gilcrease Museum, (2019, Tulsa); and with Garth Greenan Gallery at Art Basel Miami Beach 2021.

Fields's paintings are featured in private collections and the collections of museums across the country, including: Heard Museum (Phoenix); Hood Museum (Dartmouth College); Oklahoma State Museum of Art; Peabody Essex Museum; and Sam Noble Museum (University of Oklahoma, Norman).

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Yatika Fields.

Yatika Starr Fields: Fear Not will be on view at Garth Greenan Gallery, 545 West 20th Street (between Tenth and Eleventh avenues), through Saturday, December 18, 2021. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. For more information, please contact the gallery at (212) 929-1351, or email info@garthgreenan.com.

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