

APRIL 1, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SHIZU SALDAMANDO - *RESPIRA*

969 CHUNG KING ROAD

APRIL 16, 2022 – MAY 28, 2022

ARTIST'S RECEPTION: APRIL 16th, 6-9pm

DJ SET WITH DJ BROWN STARSHIP

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Shizu Saldamando, Mina with Palms, Oil, metal leaf, glitter, washi paper on wood panel, 48 x 96 inches, 2022

Charlie James Gallery is delighted to present a solo show by Los Angeles-based artist Shizu Saldamando titled *Respira*, which translates as *Breathe* in English, opening April 16th at the gallery from 6-9pm. This is Shizu Saldamando's second solo exhibition with the gallery. This show is organized around a series of eight new portraits made during the Covid period that constitute a breakthrough in Saldamando's painting practice, supported by a new video piece and a collaborative series of objects made with Los Angeles-based artist Maria Maea.

These eight new paintings employ a looser, more expressive style, using washes of paint to depict their subjects. This brings forward the woodgrain in the panels, blending subject and surface and imbuing the works with a fluid, ephemeral quality. The confluence of paint and woodgrain adds a translucent layer to the portraits and speaks metaphorically to subjecthood in general as being unfixed, not opaque. Rather, people are fluid and constantly in flux, adapting, reacting, breathing. Due to Covid restrictions, most of the photographs that formed the basis of these portraits were taken in outside/backyard situations around domesticated plant life, which help cleanse oxygen for breath. *Respira*, or *Breathe*, thus serves as both an exhortation to stay alive and carry on, while also providing apt description for Saldamando's new painting series.

Words from Shizu Saldamando on her collaborative series *When this is All Over* made with Maria Maea Garcia:

"In the way memorials seek to honor and remember people, my work usually focuses on individual portraits highlighting and celebrating the specific details people use to construct their personhood. I see my work as a celebratory ode to friends and family and to the collective crafting and self-taught artistry done by ancestors and current living family members. I make these paper flower pieces in homage to communal paper flower making- a practice done in the Japanese American Prison camps to honor those that passed because real flowers were not available in the barren landscapes the prison camps were located. I also wanted to acknowledge the overriding historical and political context that the portrait work was created through. There is a transformative and healing power within creativity, (music and art) and I'm always seeking out new ways to highlight this. In the way public memorials are a collaborative practice of collective mourning, this work became an ode not just to those who creatively channel traumas through art but also an ode to the communities that carry and inspire us. Collectively we are in mourning. Either mourning the families destroyed and murdered by police, border patrol, ICE immigration policy or covid deaths impacting essential workers and intergenerational households the hardest, hate crimes, mass shooters or by the prison and military industrial complex in general, there is much to reflect on, mourn and memorialize. The fences reference not only Ice detention centers but also the community altars and spontaneous public memorials usually found on sidewalk corners and fences. I asked Maria to collaborate with me as she not only is Asian (Pacific Islander) /LatinX like me, she carries the legacy of imperialism, colonization and generational trauma and chooses to transform it through her artistic practice by using plant and organic materials. She draws from her familial legacy and collective memory through her delicate and ephemeral plant based installations. They transform over the course of their exhibition. I feel like our work already was in dialogue in a way and so I am honored to be in collaboration with her."

Respira will also debut a video piece Saldamando created in memory of one of her neighbors who passed away from Covid in 2021 titled *Un Sueño de Tantos*, which translates as (*Dream of So Many.*) The title derives from a famous old Mexican song, a "recuerdo" (translates as "oldie") by the group Los Dos Oros. The song is an expression of longing for missed loved ones. The video captures a convergence of happy accidents that took place in the artist's backyard where her studio is located. One evening after a day of work Saldamando was gazing upon the blooming agave plant in her backyard, the bloom a sure sign of the plant's imminent passing away. Hummingbirds were feasting on the plant while a neighbor was audibly playing *Un Sueño de Tantos*. The song drifting over the scene of the agave and

hummingbirds combined to express an ode to pain, perseverance, and to life cycles. This video became documentation of a ready-made memorial, dedicated to Saldamando's neighbor and his family who moved away after his passing.

Shizu Saldamando's work uses portraiture as a means to celebrate her subjects who are her friends and fellow members of the Latinx creative community in Los Angeles. Shizu was born and raised in San Francisco's Mission District and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. She received her B.A. from UCLA School of Arts and Architecture and her M.F.A. from California Institute of the Arts. Solo exhibitions include *LA Intersections*, Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA; *Shizu Saldamando*, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, Scottsdale, AZ; *To Return*, Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; *When You Sleep: A Survey of Shizu Saldamando*, Vincent Price Art Museum, Monterey Park, CA; *All Tomorrow's Parties*, Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, PA. Selected group exhibitions include: *Phantom Sightings* at Los Angeles County Museum of Art; *Trans-Pacific Borderlands*, part of the Getty Pacific Standard Time initiative at the Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, CA; *We Must Risk Delight: Twenty Artists from Los Angeles*, an official collateral exhibition of the Venice Biennale; *Drawing the Line* at Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA and *The High Art of Riding Low* at the Petersen Automotive Museum, Los Angeles, CA. Saldamando's work resides in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the Crocker Art Museum, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Smith Art Museum at Smith College, the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, the National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, the Fidelity Collection, and numerous other public and private collections. Saldamando lives and works in Los Angeles and is represented by Charlie James Gallery.

Artist Instagram: @shizutattoo @maeamaria

Gallery website: www.cjamesgallery.com

Gallery Instagram: @charliejamesgallery