

STUART ROBERTSON

Bend Di Young Tree

Exhibition Dates: November 16, 2024 - January 11, 2025

Opening Reception: Saturday, November 16, 4:00PM - 6:00PM

Haines proudly presents *Bend Di Young Tree*, an exhibition of new work by **Stuart Robertson** (b. 1992, Kingston, Jamaica; lives and works in New York, NY). Robertson's first West Coast solo show, *Bend Di Young Tree* debuts a series of mixed-media portraits and scenes from the artist's early life, focusing on the forces that shaped his formative years in Jamaica.

A graduate of Stanford University's MFA program, Robertson's practice is inspired by nostalgia for his birthplace, confrontations with the American dream, and fantasies about the future of the African diaspora. He paints, collages, and assembles images from Black life, creating striking, often resplendent images that combine materials such as aluminum, textiles, bubble wrap, glitter, and acrylic paint. The imprint of Jamaican culture is evident throughout his work, from the artist's patois-inflected titles to his merging and mixing of discarded and recycled materials, which echoes the resourcefulness and ingenuity necessary for a growing nation.

Bend Di Young Tree, which draws its title from a Jamaican idiom about the malleability of youth to forces of influence, is anchored by a suite of four related works that the artist calls his "pillar paintings." In these autobiographical tableaux, which masterfully integrate reflective aluminum, patterned woven papers, and colorful chiaroscuro, Robertson offers a look into the familial relationships, institutions, and vernacular culture that informed his early life and worldviews. We see him as a young child, sitting at the kitchen counter of his grandparents' home in Aberdeen, rural Jamaica, and at his fourth birthday party, posing with his late older sister, Jodiann. Other works show the artist in school and at church, surrounded by peers and authority figures whose arms reach across the panels. Throughout his work, the artist hints at his complicated feelings towards these often conservative institutions, while still registering their influence.



Stuart Robertson, *Son of the Sun's Temper*, 2024
Aluminum, acrylic, enamel, textile, and paper on wood
60 x 36 inches

Robertson's pillar paintings are complemented by new self-portraits depicting pivotal moments of transition between boyhood and manhood. These works explore notions of masculinity and adolescence, as well as Robertson's departure from Jamaica for boarding school in the United States. As his world expands, his compositions grow in complexity.

Bend Di Young Tree introduces audiences to Robertson's practice through a deeply personal body of work—albeit one with a broad resonance. The exhibition reflects Robertson's desire to examine and foreground his Jamaican identity—and the realities of the Caribbean experience, both good and bad—after half a life lived abroad. In this way, the artist invites viewers to reckon with the influences—cultural and kindred—that have shaped each of us.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Stuart Robertson (b. 1992, Jamaica; lives and works in New York, NY) received his BA from Davidson College in 2015, and MFA from Stanford University in 2020. He was a finalist and commended artist in the National Portrait Gallery's Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2022, and has received residencies at the Headlands Center for the Arts, Sausalito, CA; Kala Art Institute, Berkeley, CA; Lawrenceville School, NJ; and The Space Program, San Francisco, CA. His works have been featured in exhibitions at the Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC; Grand Rapids Art Museum, MI; Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, MA; National Gallery of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica; National Portrait Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Orlando Museum of Art, FL; and Van Every/Smith Galleries, Davidson, NC.

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Stuart Robertson, "*...the tiny ants that work into the stone of doubt.*", 2024
Aluminum, acrylic, enamel, textile, and paper on wood
36 x 24 inches