

Jasmine Thomas-Girvan & Chris Ofili

Affinities

30 August–21 September 2019

24 Grafton Street, London

Private view: Thursday 29 August, 6–8 PM



Jasmine Thomas-Girvan, *Weaving Hummingbirds*, 2017
© Jasmine Thomas-Girvan. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present a two-person exhibition of work by Trinidad-based artists Jasmine Thomas-Girvan and Chris Ofili at the gallery's London location. Featuring sculptural works by Thomas-Girvan alongside paintings by Ofili, *Affinities* will bring to light the rich artistic conversation that exists between these two artists, arising both in response to their shared environment as well as an ongoing dialogue throughout the nearly two decades they have known each other. This will be the first in a series of exhibitions in which gallery artists invite artists whose work they are inspired by to participate in a collaborative presentation.

Drawing alternately from Caribbean history, myth, ritual, literature, and her own experience, Thomas-Girvan's poetically inflected works are grounded in the specificity of the Caribbean landscape and the region's colonial past, but open out onto universal themes—most prominently, transformation and the construction of identity. Her sculptures and installations seamlessly weave together traditional supports, such as wood and bronze, with both found everyday objects and materials sourced from the natural environment, including shells, pieces of coral, palm fronds, and mangrove hairs, culled from a vast collection that she has amassed over time. The resulting assemblages, which cohere into singular visual statements, are at once familiar and fantastical, both venerating and working through a rich and complicated past. As Ofili notes: "Jasmine's work tells beautiful and mysterious tales that are a combination of fragility and dread with a knowing nod towards alchemy and witchcraft of the past, present, and future."

On view will be several large- and small-scale canvases by Ofili from a 2019 body of work devoted to the figures of Calypso and Odysseus from Homer's *Odyssey*. Inspired in part by the music of Trinidad, where Ofili has lived since 2005, the artist has reimagined Calypso—traditionally represented as a deceptive femme fatale—as a striking mermaid, and he has visualised Odysseus as a beautiful, dark-skinned suitor. In the paintings, Ofili presents the characters with curving bodies, sumptuously spread out across the compositions and displayed in layered surfaces filled with arabesque vines and bubble-like forms. Known for his intricate, kaleidoscopic paintings and works on paper that deftly merge abstraction and figuration, Ofili's recent works—vibrant, symbolic, and frequently mysterious—evoke the lush landscapes and local traditions of Trinidad.

David Zwirner

Jasmine Thomas-Girvan was born in 1961 in Jamaica and has lived in Trinidad since 2000. She received her BFA from Parsons School of Design in New York, where she was awarded the Tiffany Honor Award for Excellence. She was the recipient of a Commonwealth Foundation Arts Award in 1996 and received the National Gallery of Jamaica's Aaron Matalon Award in 2012 and 2017, as the artist who made the most outstanding contribution to that year's Jamaica Biennial. Thomas-Girvan has also made a number of public commissions, one of which was presented to the Queen of England. Her work has been exhibited in the US, Jamaica, Trinidad, Venezuela, and Mexico. This is her first exhibition in the UK.

Chris Ofili was born in 1968 in Manchester, England. He received his BFA from the Chelsea School of Art, London, in 1991 and his MFA from the Royal College of Art, London, in 1993. Ofili joined David Zwirner in 2005 and has had four solo exhibitions with the gallery. The artist's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions worldwide, including at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (2017–2019); *Weaving Magic* at The National Gallery, London (2017); and *Night and Day* at the New Museum, New York (2014), which travelled to the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2015). Also in 2015, a group of Ofili's paintings was included in the 56th Venice Biennale, *All the World's Futures*, curated by Okwui Enwezor. Other monographic exhibitions have taken place at Tate Britain, London (2010 and 2005); kestnergesellschaft, Hanover (2006); The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2005); and the British Pavilion, 50th Venice Biennale (2003). In 2017, Ofili was a recipient of Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE), awarded by the Queen, and in 1998, he was awarded the prestigious Turner Prize. His work can be found in prominent institutional collections worldwide.

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