

Helwaser Gallery

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 5, 2023

Helwaser Gallery presents: Brian Michael Reed: *Elemental Trance*

Exhibition Dates: **July 5 - November 5, 2023**

Helwaser Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works by the artist Brian Michael Reed titled *Elemental Trance*. The exhibition highlights the artist's remarkable history of global community studies, showing the energetic layers that compose the world around us. For more than 20 years, Reed has explored how pigment and drawn line, particularly conveying motifs through a lens of surreal seriality, can generate visual frequencies that can lead the viewer into a resonance with his works: optically and energetically. An awareness arises from the artist's sensitivity to perceive interrelationships between the ecological and cultural structures that abound and manifest in the viewer through experiencing the works.

Reed's endless wanderlust and insatiable curiosity have led him to immerse himself in diverse cultures, religions, and practices, shaping his worldly belief system. The artist's practice involves creating field studios in remote locations; therefore, works on paper have become a much-beloved medium that provides immediacy of creation and presentation. Embedded within a shamanistic and essentialist ideology, Reed's way of seeing empowers him to perceive and connect with the energy enveloping our surroundings. His vivid narratives translate these vibrations and energies that remain imperceptible to the everyday eye.

Reed has developed a conceptual practice he refers to as Pictorial Anthropology, in which he depicts environmental evolution and cultural development to highlight global themes of love, loss, tragedy, memory, death, and the afterlife. In his choice of subjects, Reed often explores making the meek mythical; birds, crawfish, dragonflies, frogs, cactus clusters, and cherry blossoms take on symbolic meanings through Reed's unique amalgamating of diverse disciplines into visual representations. Reed's anthropomorphic depictions instill profound psychological and spiritual relationships, forging links between all living entities and emphasizing the inherent unity in our existence. Reed has developed a distinct visual language characterized by repetitive mark-making, vibrant colors, and continuously inventing a new alphabet of designs to write into his narrative. By delving into this vibrant realm, the viewer is encouraged to explore the depth and nuanced perspectives that Reed's artistry offers.

The Fake Lotus and Evolution showcase Reed's masterful abstraction of crawfish, which dwell in the murky depths of pond mud as they undergo transformative processes. These artworks incorporate lotus seed elements, portraying the crawfish as they elongate their legs and witness their claws swell, mirroring the

growth of lotus plant blossoms before breaching the pond's surface. Reed's juxtaposition of the profound darkness conveyed by India ink and the scratchboard technique against the vivid and translucent colors highlights the inherent struggle of transformation: the arduous task of shedding one's old shell and maturing into a new one. Reed's self-made scratchboard technique can also be seen in works *The Creation of the Holly River Diptych*, *Trout Flood*, and *Harvest Time*.

The lotus root pattern holds a profound significance within Reed's artistic repertoire, enrapturing viewers with its weighted meanings. Among Reed's notable works, *Dragonfly Lotus* stands out as a striking representation, blending the cultural and spiritual importance of the lotus with the transformative journey of the dragonfly throughout its life cycle. This abstract and conceptual piece artfully mirrors the lotus' transformation as it seeks purity while emerging from the muddy depths of a pond and reaching upward. Similarly, the dragonfly nymph emerges from the water to undergo its own metamorphosis, ultimately spreading its wings and taking flight. Reed ingeniously incorporates the dragonfly's wings as petals for the lotus, enabling a remarkable fusion of subjects. The insect's legs and clawed feet are a reminder of the transformative nature that can anchor itself within every individual. Reed employs various techniques, including carved block printmaking, scratchboard, hand drawing with colored pencil, and painting with translucent pigments, to include his signature motif, the lotus pattern, in his artwork. These techniques effectively convey the theme of spiritual purification, which has a personal significance for Reed.

Join us as we immerse ourselves in Reed's arrays of potent hues and repetitive harmonic marks that skillfully bridge the aqueous and Edenist realms to ignite contemplation. By delving into the fascinating creatures that burrow beneath the surface of our existence, you will experience the transformative energy of *Elemental Trance*. This online exhibit is a prelude to Brian Michael Reed's fall show at Helwaser Gallery located at 833 Madison Ave #3F, New York, NY, 10021. Proceeds will fund the artist's participation in the Jerusalem Biennale from November 9th through December 28th, 2023.

About the Artist:

Brian Michael Reed (b. 1984) is an American multi-media artist who draws creative energy from studying a wide variety of cultural experiences, global religions, and art techniques. The art reflects the cornucopia of customs, folklore, spirituality, and mythology with which Reed has interacted throughout projects and studies. To date, his projects have encompassed regional immersions in China, Japan, Indonesia, the Appalachian region of the United States, Mexico, and currently in Israel. His work is reviewed favorably by the New York Times, Washington Post, Global Times, Shanghai Daily, The Charleston Gazette-Mail, GQ Magazine, Arty, and various other publications. Reed attended graduate work at Yale University in the History of Art Department and undergraduate work in Painting and Art History at James Madison University.

Reed's artistic prowess has garnered global recognition and prominence through major institutional shows both abroad and in the US, most recently solo exhibitions at the Huntington Museum of Art (WV, USA) and the Shanghai Himalayas Museum of Art, and Yuz Museums (Shanghai, CH). Multiple awards and grants have been bestowed on the artist in promotion of his works from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and recently an invitation to prominent residencies and art festivals such as the New River Gorge National Park Artist Residency and the Jerusalem Biennale. Reed is creating new works for a solo exhibition presented by the 2023 Jerusalem Biennale, focusing on themes that show the power of water to be a conduit for prayer during the act of pilgrimage. Reed invites viewers to explore his immersive research, influenced by diverse cultures, ancient wisdom, and shamanism.

About the Gallery:

Based along Madison Avenue, Helwaser Gallery presents mid-career and established artists, including Anton Ginzburg, Boedi Widjaja, Christina Kruse, and Lin Yan. It also specializes in the work of post-war masters, such as Tom Wesselmann, Alexander Calder, Adolph Gottlieb, and Helen Frankenthaler, among others. Founded in Paris in 1986, the gallery has initiated significant exhibitions, including a retrospective on Jean Dubuffet (1996), and presentations on French cubist masters, notably Georges Braque, Jean Metzinger, and Pablo Picasso. In 2008, Helwaser Gallery marked its inaugural relocation to New York with the group exhibition Red, which presented works by Hans Hofmann, Andy Warhol, and Jean-Michel Basquiat. In 2019, Helwaser Gallery reopened its present space with a public exhibition program, presenting internationally recognized artists. The gallery program emphasizes a dialogue between contemporary art, and modern art historical movements and contexts.

For all inquiries, please email info@helwasergallery.com.

The gallery will be open from 12pm-5pm from Tuesday through Friday. Advance appointments can be made via email, and are encouraged for all visitors.

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