

ANNA ZORINA GALLERY

532 W 24 ST NYC NY 10011 TEL 212 243 2100

ALVIN ARMSTRONG

To Give and Take

May 5 - June 19, 2021

Anna Zorina Gallery and Medium Tings are proud to present *To Give and Take*, a solo exhibition of new works by New York-based artist Alvin Armstrong, curated by Stephanie Baptist. *To Give and Take* presents a series of characters, alone and paired, stationary and in motion to interrogate the vulnerability of Blackness in America.

Tightly cropped portraits and towering figures are placed in unidentifiable backgrounds and raise questions around masculinity, gender and even self-determination. Black excellence in the form of athletic prowess is juxtaposed against references to societal and police violence, as we witness the agonizing expression of young men and women, their fate yet to be determined. In *Track and Field*, two athletes in hues of blue (both in uniform and face), appear to be in mid-air, excelling at the long jump or hurdles, the actual event is not of importance.

"Athleticism is used to showcase the ways in which Black bodies are often fetishized for entertainment. Black people in this country perform at optimal levels, and the work interrogates the way society conditions Black people to believe sports are the only viable pathway to obtain some form of safety from the inequities of Black American life."

The background of these paintings is intentionally minimal, saturated with rich hues of thickly applied acrylic to give these figures more agency. We are forced to fill in the details ourselves by spending time with their bodies and feelings, as they wrestle with their place in society.

To Give and Take is a deeply personal offering. Spanning several gallery rooms, the work denotes ownership and authorship. Armstrong intentionally uses scale and technique (large-scale canvases with full-bodied figures to smaller-sized portraits) to toggle between urgency and intimacy, movement and emotion.

ALVIN ARMSTRONG was born in San Diego, CA and currently lives and works in Brooklyn. He received an MS in Eastern Medicine and is a licensed acupuncturist. The self-taught artist had his New York solo debut exhibition *This Place Looks Different* with Medium Tings in Fall 2020 and was included in the *Let Freedom Ring* installation curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah at Brooklyn Academy of Music in January 2021. Armstrong's work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Brooklyn Rail* and *Epiphany Magazine*. He will be a Fall 2021 Visual Arts Resident at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn.

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MEDIUM THINGS (founded in 2017) is a roving gallery and project space, dedicated to contemporary Black artists and artists of color that focuses on creative engagement through exhibitions, programming and collaborations. Stephanie Baptist, the Founder and Director, is an independent curator and cultural producer, who has collaborated with noted contemporary artists, organizations and individuals. She previously served as Head of Exhibitions for Tiwani Contemporary in London, is a 92nd Street Y Women in Power Fellow (2019) and is currently a mentor for New Inc, New Museum's Cultural Incubator. Baptist holds an MA in Arts Administration and Cultural Policy from Goldsmiths, University of London.

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