

ANNA ZORINA GALLERY

NEW YORK CITY | LOS ANGELES TEL +1 212 243 2100

ALVIN ARMSTRONG

Pretty Soon We'll Be Underwater

On view: May 6 - June 10, 2023

Opening Reception: Saturday, May 6th, 5-8 PM

Anna Zorina Gallery is pleased to present *Pretty Soon We'll Be Underwater*, Alvin Armstrong's third exhibition with the gallery and debut at the gallery's Los Angeles location. *Pretty Soon We'll Be Underwater* features new paintings that continue Armstrong's exploration of the Black experience in contemporary America. The majority of works are portraits of friends, neighbors, and people who are most influential to the artist, while a handful of paintings depict athletes in motion, such as swimmers on the verge of a dive and a boxer offering an uppercut. Armstrong's use of vibrant, primary colors and broad strokes provide abstract compositional fields that invite his subjects to take center stage with commanding presence.

Armstrong's portraits are imbued with entrancing energy and filled with the careful touches of an artist who pays attention to the subtlest of details. Whether they are painted from live sittings or recollected memories, each work conveys the essence and spirit of the individual. Drawn from Armstrong's immediate world, the figures range from close friends to neighborhood fixtures to heroes he has admired for years. One example is *Thank You Again*, an homage to the late jazz musician and composer, Charles Mingus. Celebrated for his masterful bass playing, Mingus is painted on a grand scale with his eyes closed, lost in the rhythm of the music. By tightly cropping his face and hand, Armstrong concentrates on the most significant aspects of the virtuoso and offers an emotional tenor that runs throughout this tribute.

The series of athletes on display are extensions of Armstrong's continued interest in sports and the perseverance required to excel. While earlier works portrayed runners, jockeys, and dancers, Armstrong now turns his gaze towards the graceful yet powerful agility of swimmers and boxers. This new series of swimmers zooms in on the moment of push-off when the diver propels their body with hands and head first into the water. Akin to a loaded spring ready to be released, the poised athlete holds all the determination in their muscles as their long limbs prepare for the laps ahead. *Haymaker*, on the other hand, depicts the torqued, muscular body of a boxer in mid-punch, the cropped figure filling the entirety of the space as though the canvas is unable to contain their powerful moves. With this series, Armstrong's unique use of perspective and vantage points heightens the tension and anticipation of these suspended moments.

Pretty Soon We'll Be Underwater comes from a line in the song, "All These Changes," by R&B soul musician Nick Hakim where he sings about the fragility of the planet and humanity's course of action to save it. While this refrain may be an appeal for caution, Armstrong uses it as a reminder to pause and absorb the humanity around us before it possibly disappears. Through his signature use of composition, texture, and color, he thoughtfully captures the daily life of his community with striking boldness and tender sincerity.

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ALVIN ARMSTRONG was born in San Diego, CA and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He received an MS in Eastern Medicine and practiced acupuncture in his early career. The self-taught artist had his New York solo debut exhibition *This Place Looks Different* with Medium Tings in Fall 2020. His first Chelsea solo exhibition *To Give and Take* was presented at Anna Zorina Gallery in May 2021, curated by Stephanie Baptiste. He was included in the Let Freedom Ring installation curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah at Brooklyn Academy of Music in January 2021 and The Artsy Vanguard 2021 exhibition in December 2021. Armstrong was a Visual Arts Resident at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn in late 2022. His work is currently on display at the Everson Museum of Art exhibition *Hoop Dreams: Basketball and Contemporary Art* until May 21, 2023. Armstrong's work has been featured in the New York Times, reviewed in Brooklyn Rail, Hyperallergic, Juxtapoz Magazine, Something Curated, Artsy and Epiphany Magazine.

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