

LUHRING AUGUSTINE CHELSEA

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Tomm El-Saieh

Toma

November 5 – December 22, 2021

Opening reception: Thursday, November 4, 6-8pm

Luhring Augustine is proud to present *Toma*, Tomm El-Saieh's first solo exhibition with the gallery and the artist's first in New York. Presented in our Chelsea location from November 5 through December 22, the show will feature new paintings by the Haitian-born, Miami-based artist.

El-Saieh's dense and rhythmic paintings derive inspiration from myriad sources, ranging from the history of international abstraction to Haitian Vodou traditions, such as trance-induction and percussive music. Obsessive markings—notations, shapes, scratches, and erasures—saturate the surfaces of his canvases, creating fields of bursting, complex color. The synesthetic, all-over compositions that El-Saieh produces through his meticulous process are at once sublime and sensual, mystical and direct, chaotic and restrained. While firmly planted in the realm of abstraction, El-Saieh's paintings also suggest complex networks, sprawling cities, or molecular structures. Within the clustered code of his brushwork, figurative associations emerge and recede.

This new body of work oscillates between the personal and the cultural, alluded to in the exhibition's title. "Toma" is a reference to both the artist's childhood nickname, and to *Ayiti Toma*, the Revolution-era moniker given to Haiti by its people, who by denominating it with a first and last name instilled the nation with a sense of personhood or divinity. El-Saieh's meditation on Haiti's rich cultural history and its devastating and complex current state of affairs are intertwined with his own lived experience as a refugee and immigrant, and brought to bear in the creation of these recent works. The paintings pay homage to, and are enkindled by, the indefatigable sense of resourcefulness and ingenuity intrinsic to the acts of creating, making, and forging ahead in Haiti.

Tomm El-Saieh was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 1984 and is of Haitian, Palestinian, and Israeli descent. He grew up in Miami, FL, where he continues to live and work, as well as in Haiti, where maintains close personal and artistic ties. In January 2022, El-Saieh's work will be featured in a year-long exhibition at the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, curated by Robert Wiesenberger, Associate Curator of Contemporary Projects. In 2018 his work was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) Miami, curated by Alex Gartenfeld and Stephanie Seidel. The same year El-Saieh was included in the New Museum's Triennial, *Songs for Sabotage*, in New York. Additional noteworthy exhibitions include solo presentations in 2015 and 2019 at CENTRAL FINE, Miami. El Saieh's work is part of the permanent collection of the ICA Miami; Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin; de la Cruz Collection, Miami; Rubell Family Collection, Miami; Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), among many others. Parallel to his artistic practice are El-Saieh's curatorial endeavors that focus on historical and contemporary Haitian art. He has organized robust and illuminating exhibitions at numerous international venues, as well as through his family's intergenerational and eponymous gallery in Port-au-Prince. Currently he is curating a solo presentation of work by Myrlande Constant for Luhring Augustine at the ADAA Art Show in November 2021.

For further information about the artists, please contact Donald Johnson Montenegro at donald@luhringaugustine.com.

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