

RYAN LEE

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I lost an arm on my last trip home: Derrick Adams, Emma Amos, Bethany Collins, Sara Rahbar

January 15 – February 21, 2015

Opening: Thursday, January 15, 6-8PM

RYAN LEE is pleased to announce *I lost an arm on my last trip home*, a group exhibition of work by **Derrick Adams**, **Emma Amos**, **Bethany Collins**, and **Sara Rahbar** that examines the ambagious nature of language, memory, bloodline, and tradition. Each artist, through painting, sculpture, and work on paper, applies individual systems to confront past, present, and future histories. The exhibition borrows its title from the opening line of *Kindred*, a novel by celebrated science-fiction author Octavia Butler. Spoken by the protagonist, it suggests the twisting qualities of history, time, and space that can be both repairing and damaging.

Informing abstract ideas of the human condition as it reflects notions surrounding history and landscape, **Derrick Adams** (b. 1970, Baltimore, US) and **Sara Rahbar** (b. 1976, Tehran, IR) have disparate approaches to similar themes of otherness, post-colonial aesthetics, and labor. Adams uses his signature architectural and “planning” language to confront social convention in large, narrative mixed-media collages on view from the *Deconstruction Worker* series (2011-present). His work moves unexpectedly, although fluidly, weaving together elements of politics, social codes, futurism, and architecture. Rahbar works primarily with bronze, found objects, textiles and war materials to examine modes of labor, tension, and aggression that exist across time, structured space, and country. Her *Flag* series (2003-2013), tapestry-like in how they hang vertically off the wall, combine military fabrics and emblems, Middle Eastern textiles, embroidery, and found US flags. They debut alongside work from her most recent series, *206 Bones* (2013-present), which are assembled from found worker tools and weaponry and have a heftier physicality. Both artists travel a distinct landscape, with oscillating dualities of native and unfamiliar, tension and calm, threat and provocation, to explicate contemporary behavior.

Conceptually, **Emma Amos** (b. 1938, Atlanta, US) and **Bethany Collins** (b. 1984, Montgomery, US) activate devices to resist and alter established visual codes and systems of meaning. Collins engages outdated text or encountered language, particularly racialized, to confront narratives and history, usually by employing a set of rules to weaken, erase, or quiet it. Requiring a specific physicality— working until her fingers throb, using spit to facilitate the erasures, or leaving charcoaled fingerprints on delicate pages of *The Southern Review*, 1988 (2014)— the work explores the unnerving possibility of multiple meanings and dual perceptions. While Collins is interested in unpacking language by examining its evolutions and limitations, Amos looks to engage and dislodge notions of social and political constructs in her provocative and deeply referential compositions. The oil paintings from the 1960s, including *Godzilla* (1966) on view, present unlikely subjects in a traditional manner. The series of monoprints from the early 1990s take on the American flag, incorporating found, bequeathed, and staged photographs to investigate narrative, history, and myths surrounding her memories of the South. Amos confronts ideas of otherness and privilege within an art historical canon as commentary on a larger investigation into America’s history. Both artists create works wrought with cultural, historical, individual, and collective memory.

Together the artists in *I lost an arm on my last trip home* have exhibited widely in important solo and group shows, including at Art in General, MoMA PS1, Museum of Modern Art, Performa Biennial, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Bass Museum of Art, Miami; Centre Pompidou, Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris; Changwon Sculpture Biennale, Gyeongnam; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; Fowler Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Goethe-Institute, New Delhi; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; National Centre of Contemporary Art, Moscow; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; and Sharjah Biennial, UAE.

Concurrently on view in the project space is *A Thousand Miles an Hour* by Kevin Cooley. Forthcoming exhibitions include *Mariam Ghani: Like Water from a Stone* and *Autumn Ahn: Lavender*, both on view February 26-April 4, 2015.

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