

REYNOLDS GALLERY

For Immediate Release

ALMOST FAMOUS

**Esther Ruiz
Adam Sultan
Matthew Warren
Levester Williams**

June 5 – July 17, 2015

Opening Reception
Friday, June 5
7 – 9 pm



Esther Ruiz, *Time Setting*, 2013
hydraulic cement, neon, Plexiglas, 11 x 12 x 4.5 inches

Reynolds Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *Almost Famous*, our perennial emerging artist group exhibition. This year's edition of *Almost Famous* brings together four artists from New York and Richmond whose art deals with energy and power both literally and metaphorically. For them, energy and power are things to be consumed, critiqued, and communicated. Curated this year by Owen Duffy, *Almost Famous* opens with a reception for the artists on Friday, June 5 and continues through July 17, 2015.

Reminiscent of newly obsolete tube televisions, Matthew Warren's light boxes emit vibrant glows. They are also completely configurable. Color and brightness, in addition to how the light boxes are stacked and installed, can change depending on mood, environment, or intuition. Warren creates the imagery for his light boxes and digital prints through the process of scanning halftone screens—old darkroom devices for rendering grayscale. Layering the halftone screens with drawings, transparencies, or other objects, create shimmering, dizzying effects contrary to their original use.

Esther Ruiz's neon and concrete sculptures operate as miniature landscapes from a distant, alien future. Synthetic and natural materials come together in Ruiz's works, and she crowns each cement cap with plexiglass, neon arches, and geodes to suggest the bleak splendor of the desert or the phosphorescence of a setting sun. Finding sources in space operas, Minimalism, and science fiction, Ruiz's art, if it suggests a future, is one that is concurrently stark and beautiful.

While Warren and Ruiz use electricity to illuminate their works, Adam Sultan's radiating paintings pulsate with visual energy. Their expressive, frenzied, flora-like forms riff on the colorful styles of modern masters, striking a balance between sincerity and irony. Evoking leisure, nature, and vitality, these paintings are generated through Sultan's systemic, yet subjective approach to painting. Sultan simultaneously works on multiple paintings, allowing each canvas to resolve itself organically.

As a counterpoint to Sultan and Ruiz's vivid works, and the coolness of Warren's art, Levester Williams' visceral sculptures take a critical position toward the idea of institutional power. Created from the unwashed bed sheets of a Virginia penitentiary, tar, and flies, these works are material manifestations of the administration of power. However, like the inmates whose histories become the substance of these works, Williams' objects are disobedient. Sticky, unavoidable, and unruly, they challenge the socially-prescribed ideals of not only the art institution, but also American culture.

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Matthew Warren lives and works in Richmond, VA. He has been part of numerous group exhibitions both in Richmond and Seattle, WA. He received the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Professional Fellowship in 2013 and held a solo exhibition through the VMFA the same year. Matthew received a BFA in Film and Electronic Arts from Bard College, and is currently a faculty member and MFA candidate in the Department of Photography and Film at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Esther Ruiz received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Studio Art from Rhodes College in 2011. She has shown nationally and internationally at various galleries including Brooklyn Wayfarers, Platform Baltimore, Vox Populi, Field Projects, Fridman Gallery, Regina Rex, and The American Center for Physics. She was born in Houston, Texas, and currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Adam Sultan received his MFA from Rutgers University in 2014 and his BA in Art History from Boston University in 2010. His work has been exhibited at Mason Gross Galleries in New Brunswick, NJ and Pioneer Works in Brooklyn. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Levester Williams is currently pursuing an MFA in Sculpture and Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University, and received a BFA *magna cum laude* from the University of Michigan. He has exhibited his work at transformer gallery, Connersmith., Artisphere, and George Mason University, among other venues. His art has been reviewed in *The Washington Post* and *East City Art*.

Owen Duffy is a Ph.D. candidate studying contemporary art history at Virginia Commonwealth University. This past fall he curated *The Tapia Twins: Bringing Together Art & Medicine*, the inaugural exhibition at VCU's Depot Gallery. He is an editor for the contemporary art magazine *ARTPULSE*, a Curatorial Assistant at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and the founder of ARTSKIP.com, a free digital platform that helps users discover contemporary art based on location and medium. He has published in *ARTPULSE*, *Art in Print*, *Fjords Review*, and *Ceramics Monthly*, and has presented his research nationally and internationally at such institutions as the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; LASANAA Live Art Hub, Kathmandu; and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

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