

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

William Norton

Styx and Stones: It's Raining Fascists

Curated by Wade Bonds

The Boiler

191 North 14th st. Brooklyn, NY

March 25th – April 15th, 2023

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Sunday: 1 – 6pm



The Boiler is proud to present ***Styx and Stones: It's Raining Fascists***, an exhibition featuring work by William Norton. Explicitly populated with politically charged imagery, Norton's paintings investigate symbols of both authoritarian oppression and protest. Employing recycled vinyl advertisements which mimic everyday image culture as his canvas, Norton's graphic mark making and bold color relationships confront the viewer with realities of terror intrinsic to unchecked abuses of power. His iconography of umbrellas, pandas, and helmets mixed with world maps, pedestals, artificial flowers, tar paper, and refurbished vinyl juxtaposes unstable signifiers which oscillate between the specific and the universal, pain and hope.

Universally, for example, the umbrella communicates shelter from both the rain and sunlight. More specifically within this exhibition, Norton references umbrellas used by protesters in Hong Kong to shield themselves from teargas and pepper spray fired by police during demonstrations in 2019, the largest series of protests in Hong Kong's history. Viewed as an essential, everyday ordinary object by today's New Yorker, umbrellas have also been historically associated across the globe with status and wealth prior to their mass production. In response to extreme power and wealth disparity as well as growing authoritarianism across the globe, Norton's umbrellas most simply and directly address the precarity and unsustainable nature of our current moment in the face of catastrophic weather events brought on by climate change and the significantly small percentage of the population that has now gained greater control of the world's wealth and economies.

Norton's anonymous, looming figures outfitted in complete riot gear reference the worldwide phenomenon of brutality inflicted upon citizens by armed enforcement groups as seen in the Hong Kong protests but also experienced daily in the United States within Black communities in particular as well as in the lives of queer and trans folks, undocumented folks, and women. Norton threads these figures throughout the exhibition, invoking the immediacy of threat as well as the paradox of oppression, specifically that of white supremacy, veiled under the guise of protection.



ABOUT WILLIAM NORTON

The son of an Air Force Colonel, Norton rejected a military path for his own calling as an artist. His work continues to interrogate that refusal as it focuses on the toxicity of masculinity built into militarized thinking. Growing up around the world gave him the opportunity to experience many different societies, cultures, and ways of being. This background shapes his examination of authoritarianism within the domestic United States as well as globally.

Norton taught Welded Steel Sculpture at Columbia University for ten years and was the Director of Installation at MoMA/PS1 for more than three years. Additionally, he has served as Director of The PeepShow Space Gallery and has independently curated three dozen exhibitions between the New York City area and Japan. His work has been exhibited in Germany, Japan, and the United States including solo shows at Michael David Gallery in SoHo and The PeepShow Space Gallery in Brooklyn.

ABOUT WADE BONDS

Wade Bonds is a curator and gallery director from Buffalo, N.Y. He is the director at Rafael Gallery, New York City and has over 20 years experience working with NYC art dealers, including Martin Gordon and Peter Marcelle. He curated exhibitions such as Sasha Meret: Select Works and Fusion: The Openness Of Abstraction In Thought And Practice at The Gallery LTD, Brooklyn.

ABOUT THE BOILER

The Boiler provides equitable access to exhibition space, creative resources, and mentorship. In partnership with ELM Foundation, we offer our youth the chance to work with each exhibiting artist through our Steam Works series. Designed as a free workshop, students engage in projects with the current exhibiting artist directly related to their practice and work on display in The Boiler. In addition to this educational series, funding from all activities within The Boiler support ELM kids programming.

ABOUT ELM FOUNDATION

ELM Foundation is a community-based nonprofit that promotes the healing and transformative power of the arts. Our methods include advocating the benefits of arts therapy, providing multidisciplinary arts education, and facilitating a nurturing environment for self-expression, all working together to form a regenerative creative collective.

