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CYDNE JASMIN COLEBY OPENS HER FIRST SOLO SHOW AT TERN WITH “ONE OF THE BOYS”

NASSAU, BAHAMAS — For its final show of the year, **TERN** is staging the first solo exhibition at the gallery by the talented Cydne Jasmin Coleby, a Bahamian digital and mixed media collage artist. Having presented Coleby in group shows and at international art fairs, TERN invited the artist to permeate the entire space for *One of The Boys*, an exhibition exploring the dynamic of bars in our local communities. The exhibition will be on view from November 30th to January 13th, 2024, with an opening reception on **Thursday, November 30th**, from **6 p.m. through 8 p.m.** with the artist present for the occasion. During the reception—occasions usually lubricated with alcohol—TERN will create dry spaces of care where persons struggling with alcohol dependency or addiction may find support and refuge.

Sanctuaries of sorts themselves, places of escape and reinvention, but also of degeneration and hopelessness, Coleby meditates on how the familiar fixtures of neighborhood bars can be places of community, while acting as wedges into the family structure. With alcoholism playing a major part in our societal ills, the artist unpacks how it affected both her own history and that of our own urban and suburban neighborhoods, often being a means to mask or cope with other, deeper underlying issues.

Self-reflection and the unpacking of childhood or family ordeals have always been an intrinsic aspect of Coleby’s art-making. Using a boldly colourful graphic design style, she examines personal, collective, and ancestral relationships to trauma and societal conditioning, scrutinizing issues such as mental health and self-love, considering how to heal through the practice of acknowledgement and forgiveness. Coleby will often mine her own family archive—old photographs that both hide and reveal ancient histories—embellishing them to highlight the unsaid or hidden truths.

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For *One of The Boys*, Coleby uses a video recording of her first Christmas as the genesis. The recording of this childhood festivity, however, was scrubbed out when her father reused the video cassette to capture friends at his local watering hole, taping over her early experience. Coleby uses this act of erasure as metaphor for examining how bars are sites of escapism, where the over-consumption of alcohol and the resulting absence—both physical but also mental—erodes relationships within the Bahamian family. Taking stills images from the video as the basis for her new paintings, the artist examines her family history, trying to understand both her father’s own childhood, the cyclical repetition of certain behaviours, and the need for escapism and self-medication.

The artist’s face and body are common motifs in her artwork. Sometimes overtly sexualized, sometimes broken up and reconstituted using local fruits as muscles and tendons, Coleby’s anatomy becomes a site of investigation within itself. In this new collection, she hovers at the margins—inserting herself as a viewer, eavesdropper, or participant on the side lines. While Coleby was not historically present in the scenes (since her father, for urgent health reasons, had become a teetotaler by the time she was grown) she was there even so—literally at home with her mother, or metaphorically underneath the erased film—and she alludes to this by repeatedly inserting herself in the images. Sometimes it is overt: she leans on the bar as an accomplice or a partner-in-crime, befriending them, joining in as “one of the boys,” sometimes it’s oblique: a disembodied hand toasting amongst others or a series of eyes, watching, learning, aiming to understand this aspect of her father’s journey.

Timed to coincide with Junkanoo season, the traditional architecture of the gallery manifests both bar and Junkanoo shack, as the work in the exhibition also pays homage to the creative spaces of “the shacks” with its specific use of materials—such as glitter and crêpe paper—and its techniques and “tricks,” like collage, assemblage and faux gemstones, added into her paintings. She also uses the bright and sometimes jarringly contrasting colours of those traditional costumes, both as a nod to these spaces that are also often bastions of brotherhood, as to contrast between “the shacks” as being both positive spaces of creativity and community, while also negative spaces of absenteeism and escapism. Eased with rum and plenty Kalik, the shacks have also been traditionally male spaces, making little room for female Junkanooers, and many women cite being “Junkanoo widows” from not seeing their spouses for months at a time. One

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does not know, though, how these spaces may rescue Bahamian men and boys, providing spaces where they can be creative, flamboyant and expressive in ways that traditional jobs or society does not allow.

Coleby speaks lovingly of her family and acknowledges that while her father was absconding from something, he never lost his capacity to take care of the home. She understood from an early age that it was not the family he was attempting to elude, but something deeper and she hopes, by having these conversations in public, by showing the need for healthy sites of community and healing, that we might find a way to support those who are struggling behind their masks.

For more information on this exhibition, email Amanda at amanda@terngallery.com.

TERN is a contemporary art gallery and art consultancy business with a focus on emerging and mid-career artists from The Bahamas and the wider Caribbean. TERN celebrates and supports regional contributions to the visual arts while contributing to the international contemporary art market. The core mandates are to operate and maintain a public gallery to exhibit artworks from a global network of artists, to collaborate with the best minds and tastemakers in the industry, and to encourage the development of the local art market. As our name suggests, TERN encompasses a sense of local belonging with global access.

Cydne Jasmin Coleby (b. 1993, Nassau) is an interdisciplinary artist from The Bahamas, primarily working in digital and mixed media. Her practice centers on digital and mixed-media collages that investigate the transformative effects of trauma through a personal lens. Trained on home soil, Coleby pursued her associate's degree in Fine Art from the University of The Bahamas (the highest achievable arts qualification in the country), before moving on to freelance in graphic design with a specialty in brand design. After working successfully for several local entities, and later, communications Manager for The Current: Baha Mar Gallery & Art Center, Coleby recommitted herself to her art practice in 2018 with her work in the ninth National Exhibition "NE9: The Fruit and the Seed" at the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas. Since then, she has exhibited both locally and internationally in Europe, Asia, the United States,

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and the Caribbean, and her work is found in collections worldwide including The Netherlands, Israel, France, The Bahamas, and the USA.