

HEADSTONE

Second Hand News

Théo Bignon and Aaron McIntosh

May 6 -28, 2023

For Immediate Release:

Headstone is proud to announce *Second Hand News*, a two-person exhibition with Théo Bignon and Aaron McIntosh. Steeped in queerstory, Bignon and McIntosh cultivate and celebrate the power of difference. *Second Hand News* is a lush and botanically potent assortment of stitched and quilted textiles - fictitious plant life, stretched and beaded under-the-belt fabrics parading as a canvas, a sex-toy ornamented ficus made of smutty stories. Each work embeds an ontological experience of how good it feels to be unabashedly queer.

Bignon is generous in his pursuit, offering an introduction to the structural politics foundational to his work; he intricately transforms glass beads into lavender stems, a technique inherited from 15th century Italian bead-workers, highlighting the use of misshaped materials and the resilience of the workers fooling the bourgeoisie. Bignon's false lavenders gesture to the ingenuity of ever-in-peril queer identities and nurture trace sites of potential - transparent, colorful, and forever. His work prepares one for accepting desires and inclinations within their identity, developing a sense of pride and subcultural distinction. Bodily stains are invoked and used like ink paintings with the addition of lavishly adorned beadwork enunciating their pooling perimeters. Each celebrates the truest document of pleasure - life. Bignon's work nods at his predecessors like Paul Thek, Nick Cave, and Jeffrey Gibson - there is charming authenticity in each maneuver that is deeply vulnerable and fearlessly free.

Alongside Bignon is a fourth generation quiltmaker from Appalachia, Aaron McIntosh. In a practice that straddles quilts and sculpture, he subverts and exposes larger social constructions of deviance, shame, and heteronormativity. Directly connecting the personal stories of queerfolk to forces of nature such as the resiliency of weeds, the speculative herbs presented here are a continuation of his internationally recognized *Invasive Queer Kudzu* project. In both, McIntosh reinvents a 'natural' world that perhaps one overlooked. Afterall, a buttplug masquerading as a root vegetable must get plucked. His new body of work made of found, quilted fabrics is a form of selection similar to one's sexual curiosity, and are collaged portraits of his harvest. Additionally, the exhibition features a hallmark of McIntosh's artistic career; a quilted, digitally printed fabric panel depicting a farm boi from a zesty magazine cover—anchoring one's internal fantasy into their lustful gaze.

Ripe with contradictions and irony, the song "Second Hand News" by Fleetwood Mac served as a quintessential preface to one of the greatest breakup albums in music history, *Rumors*. Like any relationship worth talking about, it is one's reactions and dealings with the small catastrophes that determine romantic fate. *Second Hand News* embraces the walkabouts with and without partnership. In his famous musical, *Into the Woods*, Sondheim yearns for autonomy and independence throughout life so that one may change/grow without trepidation or fear. The lyric goes,

"Oh if life were made of moments
Even now and then a bad one!
But if life were only moments,

Then you'd never know you had one."

Oh the perpetual struggle of wanting both! It is those relationships over time that ground and tether us to our words and actions. *Second Hand News* is a frolic through the tumultuous windings of togetherness and perhaps various orifices, regarding love's freedoms and self-discovery.

Théo Bignon is a French artist living and working in Tiohtià:ke (Montréal), whose work investigates the intersections of desire, ornamentation and queer existence. His work has been exhibited internationally including Villa Noailles (Hyères, France), The Hive Gallery (Los Angeles, CA), Site:Brooklyn (Brooklyn, NY), Bunker Projects (Pittsburgh, PA), Salon LB (Chicago) and Whatiftheworld Gallery (Cape Town, South Africa). His research and writing have been published in the journal *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion and Catalyst: Casual Encounters*. Théo is also one of the three co-founders and co-organizers of Abstract Lunch, a grassroots artist-run curatorial project emphasizing experimentation and play, and aiming to create opportunities for artists in various stages of their career. He holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago as a New Artist Society scholar, and a BA from Sciences Po Paris.

Aaron McIntosh is a cross-disciplinary artist and fourth-generation quiltmaker whose work mines the intersections of material culture, family tradition, sexual desire and identity politics. His exhibition record includes numerous solo and group exhibitions, including at Yale University's Green Art Gallery, the Los Angeles Craft & Folk Art Museum, the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay & Lesbian Art in New York City, and most recently was included in *Radical Tradition: Quilts and Social Change* at the Toledo Museum of Art. He is a 2020 United States Artist Fellow in Craft, and other honors include a 2017 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Fellowship, and two Windgate Fellowships in 2006 and 2015 from the Center for Craft. He has held residencies at the Oak Spring Garden Foundation, Banff Centre, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts and the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. His critical writing has been published in the *Brooklyn Rail*, *Hyperallergic*, the *Surface Design Journal*, and the *Journal of Modern Craft*. He currently lives and works in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal, Canada, where he is an Associate Professor in the Fibres & Material Practices program at Concordia University.

Headstone is an artist-run, for-profit contemporary art gallery located in Kingston, New York, dedicated to showing two-person and solo exhibitions. The 1,100sq ft gallery space was created by artists Lauren Aitken and Chase Folsom. The gallery is deeply committed to our artists and their ideas, providing them with a beautiful contemporary space and the necessary support to help them foster and fulfill their artistic vision. It is with considerate curation and our vast love of the art world that we bring together and introduce emerging and established artists, some of whom have yet to benefit from wider critical and commercial attention. We believe the arts should be equitable and accessible to anyone who would like to engage. Through artist exhibitions, we hope that Headstone can collectively bring people together, create community, expand connections and become an engaging, diverse melting pot of artists, creatives, collectors, and community members.

Opening Reception: Saturday, May 6, 5pm-8pm

Gallery Hours:

Friday - Sunday, Noon to 5pm

Or by appointment

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