

**NICOLA
VASSELL**

Opening November 9, 6–8 pm
November 9 — December 21, 2023



ALVARO BARRINGTON:
Island Life

Gallery Hours

Tuesday–Saturday, 10 am–6 pm

138 10th Ave. New York, NY 10011

For Press Inquiries

Hannah Gottlieb-Graham, ALMA Communications — hannah@almacommunications.co

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“One of my interests in shows especially with Nicola is how the Caribbean and my time spent there has influenced how I understand myself but also how those from the islands have impacted the global imagination. “Island Life” gets its name from the amazingly wonderful Grace Jones and her album “Island Life.” I’ve returned to the hibiscus flower as a way to depict notions of intimacy and migration having left Grenada to join my mother in Brooklyn when I was 8 years old. The hibiscus flower’s stamens are depicted stretching towards edges of the canvas. The flowers are painted with oil acrylic enamel paints and sit on flat spray-painted solid colors referencing sign paintings common on beaches of the Caribbean as well as artists such as Ed Ruscha, Andy Warhol and Basquiat. In my “We be Jammin series” paintings on the steel drum the musical instrument of Trinidad and Carnival culture are drawn from “We be Jammin” t-shirts often sold to tourists visiting the Caribbean and places like New Orleans and were regularly purchased by my parents as souvenirs on their yearly honeymoon trips to various islands.”

– Alvaro Barrington

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About Alvaro Barrington

Alvaro Barrington (b. 1983 Caracas, Venezuela) is an artist based in London and New York. Born in Venezuela to Grenadian and Haitian parents, Alvaro Barrington was raised between the Caribbean and Brooklyn, New York. An unwavering commitment to community informs his wide-ranging practice. While Barrington considers himself primarily a painter, his artistic collaborations encompass exhibitions, performances, concerts, fashion and contributions to the Notting Hill Carnival in London. His approach to painting is similarly inclusive – embracing non-traditional materials and techniques such as burlap, concrete, cardboard and sewing – and infused with references to his personal and cultural history.

Influence and exchange are crucial to Barrington, who draws upon a host of artistic and cultural references in his work. His personal touchstones include rapper Tupac Shakur and 90s hip-hop culture, jazz and the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, Jamaican political activist Marcus Garvey, modernist icons such as Willem de Kooning, Paul Klee, Agnes Martin and Louise Bourgeois, and his art-world peers. His resolutely interdisciplinary approach follows in the footsteps of Robert Rauschenberg's groundbreaking *Combines*, which he references by incorporating real objects into the picture plane, including carpets, steel drums, brooms and fans. He is an artist who is continually expanding his constellation of references, inspirations and communities, while always acknowledging the formative role of art history in his practice.

Barrington's work is part of institutional collections, including The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield; ICA, Miami; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; Loewe Foundation, Madrid; Fundación NMAC, Cádiz; Rennie Museum, Vancouver; Start Museum, Shanghai; X Museum, Beijing and Tate, London. Recent solo exhibitions and projects include: *They Got Time*, Galerie Thaddeus Ropac Pantin, Paris (2023); *Grandma's Land*, Sadie Coles HQ, London (2023); Notting Hill Carnival, London (2023, 2022, 2019); *91-98 jfk-lax border*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2022); *SPIDER THE PIG, PIG THE SPIDER*, South London Gallery, London (2021); *GARVEY 1: BIRTH – The Quiet Storm*, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York (2021); Galerie Thaddeus Ropac, Paris (2021); Corvi-Mora, London (2020); Sadie Coles HQ, London (2021, 2019); Emalin, London (2021, 2019, 2018) and MoMA PS1, Queens, NY, USA (2017).

Barrington's work has been shown in multiple group exhibitions, including *The Culture: Hip Hop and Contemporary Art in the 21st Century*, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, USA (2023); *The Drawing Centre Show*, Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2022); *Mixing it Up: Painting Today*, Hayward Gallery, London, UK (2021), among many others. Together with Julia Peyton-Jones he curated the exhibition *Artists I Steal From* at Thaddeus Ropac, London (2019).

Barrington was selected to present a new installation for the Tate Britain Commission in 2024.

About Nicola Vassell Gallery

Nicola Vassell Gallery is a contemporary art gallery committed to discourse that widens the lens of the history and future of art. Its focus is on developing an inter-generational, cross-disciplinary program of international artists and thinkers.

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