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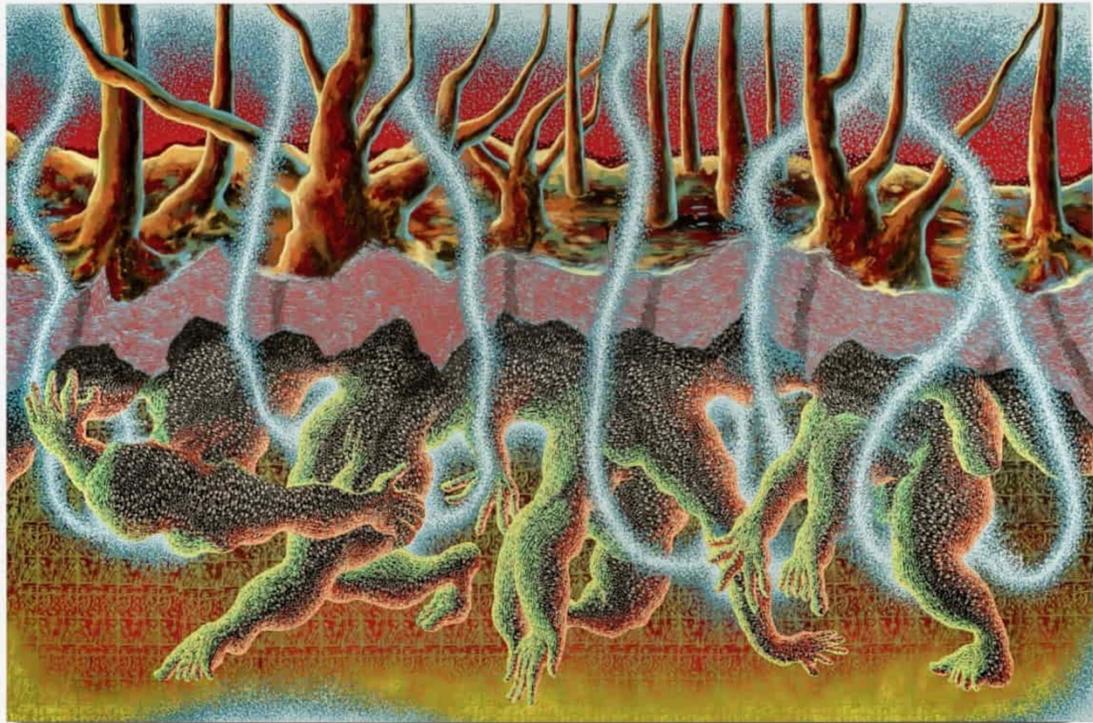
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# WIDEWALLS

Cane, Hesper, "Didier William's New Body of Work Combining Personal Narratives and Mythology Take Over James Fuentes," *Widewalls*, May 9, 2023

## Didier William's New Body of Work Combining Personal Narratives and Mythology Take Over James Fuentes

Exhibition Reviews



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**May 9, 2023**

Hesper Cane

James Fuentes, one of the leading contemporary art galleries in New York, traversed the continent to introduce a new spot in Los Angeles. Placed in a 1920s-era commercial building on Melrose Avenue, the recently opened James Fuentes gallery presents a space contrasting the old and the new by introducing subtle renovations and preserving historical elements. They entrusted this task to Leong Leong, an award-winning architecture studio and design consultancy acclaimed for designing the US Pavilion for the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale.

The LA location of James Fuentes opened its doors this May with a solo show featuring new works by Didier William under the title *Things Like This Don't Happen Here*.



Didier William – Cheval, the Other Side of the Mirror is Home, 2023

## Bridging the Hiatus

Formally educated, Didier William manages to successfully employ different techniques in his work, such as painting and printmaking, while introducing the qualities of carving and collage, as well. After recently organizing the largest survey of his career at the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, William presents his newest works at James Fuentes. Fourteen new canvases represent a thorough investigation into personal memory, reimagined through a fantastical lens. The results of that intimate journey down memory lane produce images that seem like dream-like, fictional, mythological visions often based on William's childhood stories. The stories of him sleepwalking as a child, of the family dog, or the harrowing experience of his mom being harassed at work become starting points for narratives reimagined. Bridging the hiatus between the real and the imaginary initiates the artist's exploration of the liminal. Borders, or more precisely – transcending the boundaries, become the focal point in the work of this Haitian-born, North Miami-raised artist to map out the nuances of a diasporic identity.

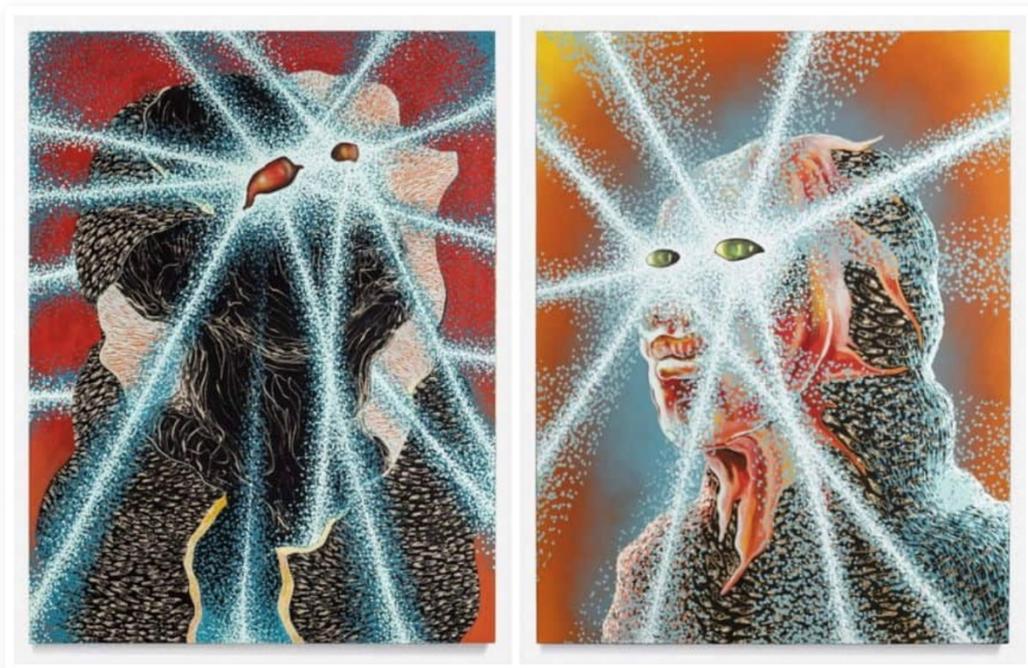


**Left:** Didier William – My Father's Nightmares, My Sleepwalkers Crucible, 2023 / **Right:** Didier William – Plonje (Dive), 2023

## The Multiplicity of the Current

In his other works presented in the show, Didier William constructs a visual fable of immigration deeply rooted in his own experiences but manages to elevate the story to a universal one. The strategies William uses include placing the figures in surreal backgrounds that seem suspended in reality or depicting desolate, fictitious landscapes. Whether selecting rock formations, caves, or underwater seascapes, the magnificent current is the recurring element. The energetic beam enveloping Williams' apparitions and titans, suffusing them, or bursting brightly across a landscape bears a variety of meanings. The electrical current, also present in William's previous work, represented a flash of lightning in a storm and alluded to frequent Caribbean hurricanes. Now, the meaning goes through a meaningful metamorphosis.

” *In the new body of work, the electrical current sometimes emanates from the characters themselves. In this particular case, the spirits below ground are being charged, awakened, and beckoned by the current.*



Left: Didier William – Dezabiye, a Supple Burning Glare, 2023; Right: Didier William – Dezabiye, a Burning Glare Withheld, 2023

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## Didier William at James Fuentes

Referencing the idea of a split in his paintings, Didier Williams aims to mend the gaps within our world and ourselves. His previous cooperation with James Fuentes includes producing the first monograph of this Philadelphia-based artist, published by James Fuentes Press in 2021.

The exhibition *Things Like This Don't Happen Here* is on view at [James Fuentes](#) in Los Angeles until June 17th, 2023.

Featured images: Didier William – Cursed Grounds: They'll Come for Us. They'll Come from the Sky, 2022 / Didier William – I Wanted Her to Kill Him, I Know Why She Didn't, 2023 / Didier William - Viande (Meat), 2022. All images courtesy of the author and James Fuentes.