

MARC STRAUS

NEW YORK

RENÉE STOUT

September 10 – October 15, 2021

Opening Reception: Friday, September 10th, 4 - 8 PM

MARC STRAUS is proud to present our first solo exhibition with Washington D.C. based artist Renée Stout (b. 1958). The exhibition is a survey of paintings and sculptures from recent years.



Renée Stout, *A Conjured Kindred Spirit*, 2013
Acrylic paint and collaged vintage photograph on
wood panel
24 x 24 inches (60.96 x 60.96 cm)

Stout's inspirations are deeply rooted in her research of Hoodoo, Vodou, Santeria, and other African-based belief systems that have manifested and spread throughout the African Diaspora over centuries and continue today. Her focus is primarily on the American Southeast and Caribbean, where those belief systems have had some influences from Catholicism and Native American spiritual traditions. She has been drawn to science fiction and all forms of music since her youth. She sees the shared hopes and aspirations these different influences provide people. She's taken countless trips to the Caribbean, New Orleans, and other communities throughout the U.S. where shamanistic practices exist and play a role in communal life. This body of work is Renée Stout's gorgeous reclamation of history dear to her, of the need to understand and honor traditions, and place

them in a current vernacular.

Stout sometimes references an alter-ego, Fatima Mayfield, who is a major character motif throughout her oeuvre. Fatima Mayfield, is a root worker, who provides alternative health care to those in her community who would not otherwise have access to these services. This narrative, deeply ingrained in modern America, explores longtime issues of underserved communities, issues that have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Her paintings have a phantasmagoric quality with illusive narratives: often with writing and numerology. In *Lotus Root* (2018) the central area appears to have a piece of graph paper affixed with writing and a drawing. It is a collage, but it has also been meticulously painted. What looks like pre-printed paper lines are all hand made. Titles bring us part way into her narrative: *A Conjured Kindred Spirit* and *The Alchemy of Healing*. Many of the sculptures are small and appear to be antique commercial objects, but in reality, they are carefully composed fictions. *My John the Conqueror Root* appears to be an old record

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turntable, but it's an assemblage of scavenged objects, many hand-constructed or resurfaced, to be a believable facsimile of an original pre-existing device. She affixes a small magnifying glass to see closeup on the inside that an actual High John the Conqueror Root, legendary in African American lore and Blues music, is what's *powering* the machine. *Spirit Detector* started with the empty shell of a very old radio, but the rest is hand-made and fitted in to become something new. She assigns these 'machines' specific supernatural abilities that transcend our human existence in the world. They are physical metaphors for universal hopes.

Stout crosses dimensional planes to illustrate and celebrate the paths humans take to escape difficult moments in our current, often chaotic, and at times a feeling of doomed existence; paths to connect to spirits, beings, and imagined other worlds. Systems of faith that something bigger and beyond everyday perceptions is out there and somehow will steer the ship back to the right path.

Throughout Stout's work, there is an undercurrent of contemporary political commentary. Her work often touches upon specific events from the last five years, as well as larger, looming global issues such as climate change and immigration policy.

In 2020, Stout was awarded The Adolph & Esther Gottlieb Foundation Award, and a Virginia A. Groot Foundation Award, and in 2018, the Women's Caucus for Art, Lifetime Achievement award.



Renée Stout, *Spirit Detector*, 2014
Found radio body, found technological parts,
wood, paint, soil, graphite, and mixed media
19 x 12.8 x 7 inches (48.3 x 32.5 x 17.8 cm)

Stout was born in Junction City, Kansas, and grew up in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Her work is in the permanent collections of The National Gallery of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Smithsonian American Art Museum, The High Museum in Atlanta, The Hirshhorn, The Baltimore Museum of Art, The Dallas Museum of Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art, The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Saint Louis Museum of Art, The Detroit Institute of Arts, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, The Museum of Fine Arts Houston and many more.