

• FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE •

Paolo Arao

Devotion

April 13 — May 11, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 13, 5–8 pm

Free and open to the public | Artist in attendance

David B. Smith Gallery is proud to announce *Devotion* by Paolo Arao, the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Presented in the Main Gallery and Project Room, *Devotion* features new loom and textile works alongside collaborative totemic sculptures.

The concept of devotion, the invisible connective tissue woven throughout experience, is indicative of Paolo Arao's artistic practice. Through devotion we find discipline, dedication, and purpose; the natural result of years of investment. Stalwarts of his practice, colorful quilted textiles have been important attributes of works. However, new to Arao's oeuvre are textile paintings made on the loom, handwoven multi-panel tapestries, and wooden and fiber sculptures created collaboratively with artist Gregory Beson. Each of these formats invites new possibilities of meaning into the creative process, joining in various combinations while forging unique visual and textural rhythms.

Classically trained in music, Arao's connection to the tactile is poetically linked to his years spent as an aspiring concert pianist. When viewing Arao's textile drawings, where geometric patterns are hand stitched into appliquéd patchworks, the vision of nimble fingers moving across the fabric comes to mind. In *Devotion*, precision needlework complements the woven backdrops for his *Nocturnes* and *Études*, a new series of intimately-scaled, wall-based textile works, capturing all the color and culturally relevant patterning indicative of Arao's signature work. The lyricism of material interplay evokes attentive labor, creating works that harmonize aesthetics, techniques, and the artist's heritage.

Following a long tradition of Filipino cultural beliefs, color and pattern are of utmost importance in *Devotion*. The "all-seeing, protective eye" or repeating diamond motif present throughout Arao's work has ties to indigenous textile production. Traditionally, the more intricate and colorful the textile, the more protective the garment. Directly referencing, and not merely replicating this custom, Arao utilizes three layers of patterning: woven, quilted, and hand-stitched. Evidenced in the integrated manner in which the works are created and underscored by meticulous hand-embroidered embellishments, there is a palpable tenacity in the amount of focus and attention paid to every aspect of construction.

A visually arresting testament to the potential of artistry, design, and craftsmanship, *Devotion* is defined by both personal investment and collaborative potential. Tradition meets innovation, fiber meets wood, discipline invites intimacy.



Paolo Arao, *Étude (Constellation)*, 2024, hand-stitched cotton thread, pieced and sewn cotton + denim, and hand-woven cotton in wood frame, 12 x 9 in. (30.5 x 22.9 cm)

About Paolo Arao

Paolo Arao is a Filipino-American artist working with textiles. Arao received his BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University and was a participant at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. He has shown his work in numerous group exhibitions nationally and internationally and has presented solo exhibitions at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (Omaha, NE), the Columbus Museum (Columbus, GA), David B. Smith Gallery (Denver, CO), and Morgan Lehman Gallery (New York, NY), and Western Exhibitions (Chicago, IL). Residencies include: MacDowell, Art Omi, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, The Museum of Arts and Design (New York, NY), Millay Arts, the Studios at MASS MoCA, Vermont Studio Center, Lower East Side Printshop Keyholder Residency, NARS Foundation, Wassaic Project, BRIC Workspace, Fire Island Artist Residency, and the Atlantic Center for the Arts. Arao's work has been published in *New American Paintings*, *Maake Magazine*, *Artmaze*, *Dovetail*, *Harper's Magazine* and *Esopus*. Paolo Arao is a 2021 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in Painting from The New York Foundation for the Arts and a 2023–2024 Pollock-Krasner Foundation grantee. He lives and works in The Catskills, NY.

Paolo Arao and Gregory Beson met during the Open Studio Residency at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Deer Isle, Maine in the summer of 2022. They are returning to Haystack this summer to co-teach a two-week workshop called *Wood + Fiber: A Marriage of Materials*.

This presentation in the Project Room at David B. Smith Gallery marks Arao + Beson's second collaboration together. Their first collaborative work was commissioned by and is currently on view at the Colby College Museum of Art in Waterville, ME through May 12, 2024.

About David B. Smith Gallery

David B. Smith Gallery is committed to presenting intelligent and culturally relevant exhibitions in its Denver location, featuring the region's most important emerging talent alongside internationally recognized artists. Through its curatorial program, participation in art fairs, and extensive media coverage in publications such as *Artforum*, *Art in America*, and *ARTnews*, David B. Smith Gallery has cultivated a strong regional, national and international collector audience. *The New York Times* hailed the gallery as offering "an exciting contrast of cutting edge works." The gallery also maintains an active publishing division, which produces exhibition catalogues and editions.

David B. Smith Gallery is a member of the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA).

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