



Installation view of Blane De St. Croix - Horizon - at the NYUAD Art Gallery. Image Courtesy: NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery

ART

## The NYUAD Art Gallery's Fall Exhibition now open as the nation prepares to host COP28

Inspired by the UAE's environment

Press Release

October 4, 2023

- Blane De St. Croix: Horizon features major new works inspired by the UAE landscape and environment

**Abu Dhabi:** To coincide with COP28 and the Year of Sustainability, **Blane De St. Croix: Horizon**, an exhibition inspired by the artist's study of the UAE environment, has opened to the public at The NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) Art Gallery. The artist has unveiled several major new works and sculpture series, which respond to the UAE landscape.

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This exhibition is the result of Blane De St. Croix's year-long residency at The Art Gallery, in the lead up to COP28. During this period, he interviewed faculty and climate experts, and joined dialogues about environmental issues being researched by faculty and students across NYUAD, from the sciences and social sciences to the arts and humanities. A series of these interviews is presented in a video installation in the exhibition.

The show surveys De St. Croix's work from ecosystems around the world, and centers on several major new works. The largest of these, *Salt Lake Excerpt, UAE*, emerged from his collaboration with theater artist Joanna Settle, an Arts Professor and Associate Dean at NYUAD. They co-created this work in response to the salt lake "sabkhas" of the UAE. Together they designed a light, sound, and sculpture landscape made from at least 50,000 plastic water bottles. The exhibition also includes an "infinite landscapes" series based on the UAE's deserts, developed from work with NYUAD's Research Visualization and Fabrication lab. Then, in response to his dialogues with a cluster of faculty in the Social Sciences and Humanities who are conducting research on the Himalayas, he produced *High Peaks: Himachal (Snow Mountain)*. In it, sculptures of Mount Everest and five other peaks loom over the visitor, and appear to be melting and collapsing.

NYUAD Vice Chancellor Mariët Westermann said: "I have long known Blane De St. Croix for his deep engagement with climate issues. After his highly successful show at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) in 2020-2021, I teamed up with Maya Allison, Executive Director of The NYUAD Art Gallery, to invite Blane to undertake a residency and exhibition at NYUAD. This show is the culmination of his time with us and was developed in partnership with so many partners at NYUAD and in the UAE community. As COP28 approaches, we are delighted to see many facets of our university programming aligned with the UAE's Year of Sustainability."

Executive Director of The NYUAD Art Gallery Maya Allison commented: "Commissioning an exhibition of this scale and depth, and working with an artist through the development process, means seeing the subject through their eyes. In this case, it meant seeing the UAE through the eyes of the artist, as he discovered the complex, living landscapes of the region. The subject of our environment looms large as COP28 approaches in the UAE, and we, as a global academic institution, have a critical role to play in the path to climate change solutions. I am moved by the ecological challenge that confronts humanity now, but also reminded of the possibilities for renewal. Art is a vital tool for investigating our place in the world, through the experience of all of our senses, when we enter an exhibition like this. I am grateful to Blane De St. Croix, and everyone who supported his research, for helping us to grow our vision for art as a way to more fully comprehend our world, together with scientists, historians, researchers, experts, and policy makers."

Blane De St. Croix added: "Having traveled to many spectacular and inspiring, but ecologically fragile, environments, including the Gobi Desert and the Arctic Circle, my studies of the equally beautiful UAE desert reinforced a truth that both artists and scientists tell us: our planet is deeply interconnected, as are the environmental challenges we face. Any solutions we might develop in response must account for this fact. I thank the faculty at NYUAD for their

support in developing this new body of work, which I hope will inspire people to think in new ways about how we interact with nature.”

The exhibition is being held as NYU Abu Dhabi is chairing the Universities Climate Network (UCN). Comprising 31 UAE-based institutions of higher education, the UCN collaborates to facilitate dialogues, workshops, public events, policy briefs, and youth participation in the months to and beyond COP28.

*Blane De St. Croix: Horizon* runs through January 14, 2024, from Tuesday through Sunday, 12-8pm. For more details visit [here](#).

### **About Blane De St. Croix**

De St. Croix’s work has been widely exhibited both nationally and internationally. His most recent exhibition titled *How to Move a Landscape* was a major solo presentation at MASS MoCA (USA) in 2021. The artist has won numerous awards and distinctions for his sculpture as well as for his research. Most significantly, the US National Science Foundation awarded him a National Science Foundation grant to develop a research project in the Yukon Arctic together with two scientists. He is also the recipient of the Lee Krasner Award for Lifetime of Artistic Achievement, which is the latest in a series of grants the Pollock-Krasner Foundation has awarded him. De St. Croix has also been recognized for his artistic practice by various leading arts foundations through fellowships and grants, such as the New York State Council on the Arts/New York Foundation for the Arts (NYSCA/NYFA) Artist Fellowship for Architecture/Environmental Structures/Design; the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship; the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painters and Sculptors; the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Sculpture; and the Smithsonian Institute’s Artist Research Fellowship. The artist has also undertaken prestigious artist residencies, including several fellowships at both the MacDowell Colony (New Hampshire, USA) and Yaddo Artist Residencies (New York, USA).

### **About The NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery**

[www.nyuad-artgallery.org](http://www.nyuad-artgallery.org)

Established in 2014, The NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) Art Gallery is the Gulf’s first of its kind, and among the only university galleries in the region with a program of scholarly and experimental museum exhibitions. Supporting the progress made by other arts institutions within the UAE, The NYUAD Art Gallery and the projects it supports serve the local arts community as a testing ground for new and innovative curatorial approaches that nourish the dialogue around exhibition practice in the Gulf. The program is recognized for mapping new territories and ideas, presenting exhibitions by internationally established artists, curators, and scholars. A regular book publication program is a core part of its curatorial frame within its academic mission. In addition, its auxiliary venue, the Project Space, is an exhibition laboratory for UAE-based artists and curators. Situated within NYU Abu Dhabi, the community of which hails from

over 125 countries, the Gallery, the Project Space, and the Gallery's Reading Room collectively open up artistic opportunities and initiate regional and global dialogue.

### **About NYU Abu Dhabi**

<https://nyuad.nyu.edu/en/>

NYU Abu Dhabi is the first comprehensive liberal arts and research campus in the Middle East to be operated abroad by a major American research university. NYU Abu Dhabi has integrated a highly selective program with majors in the sciences, engineering, social sciences, arts, and humanities with a world center for advanced research. Its campus enables students to succeed in an increasingly interdependent world, and to advance cooperation and progress on humanity's shared challenges. NYU Abu Dhabi's high-achieving students have come from over 125 countries and speak over 100 languages. Together, NYU's campuses in New York, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai form the backbone of a unique global university, giving faculty and students opportunities to experience varied learning environments and immersion in other cultures at one or more of the numerous study-abroad sites NYU maintains on six continents.

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