

Marc Bauer (b. 1975, Geneva; lives and works in Zurich) is fascinated by the way images circulate through society. Using sources ranging from personal family albums to digital news streams, he reconfigures found imagery into a prismatic view of history, culture, and politics. Bauer likens this process to a kind of witnessing, a deliberate and personal way of seeing and understanding the world.

RESILIENCE, Drawing the Line, 2023, represents Bauer's interest in "image survival," a theory devised by German art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929), in which certain icons, motifs, and symbols persist in history. These images link past to present and shape our understanding of ourselves and our culture. Here, Bauer's fragmented narrative traces iconographies of domination and resistance. He brings together a wide range of examples, including an ancient Roman relief sculpture, 15th-century religious scenes, 18th- and 19th-century representations of enslaved Africans, and contemporary photojournalism. His exploration asks how visual images teach and codify power, and in so doing, proposes that power is as mutable as identity and images themselves.

Bauer layers depictions of manmade disaster and patriarchal violence alongside those of resistance, aid, and affection. His images, sourced from art history and present-day Houston, evoke political battles over climate justice, humane migration policy, and the rights of marginalized communities. In one passage, a pair of climate refugees are adrift, sitting alongside ghostly figures from historical accounts of catastrophes at sea; visitors may recognize the references to John Singleton Copley's painting *Watson and the Shark, 1778*, or Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa, 1818–19*. Juxtaposed with the flooded landscape are figures in vogue postures (a stylized dance named for its resemblance to models posing in fashion magazines), embracing and caressing each other, and prominently displaying symbols associated with queer identity. In centering this scene, Bauer considers how queerness and the queer encounter—in its joy, celebration, and fluidity—might present new pathways to care for one another and disrupt violent power systems that seek to exploit and control society and the natural world. The artist's own memories float across the drawing in individual panels, punctuating the narrative with references to how he was taught, at times injuriously, to portray his own culture, gender, race, and sexuality.

Bauer will return twice to Houston over the course of the display to alter his drawing, layering and blurring charcoal and pastel into a kind of palimpsest, a composition that bears visible traces of changes made on its surface. The artist has provided citations of his art historical references and welcomes visitor feedback in the comment book at the entrance to the Menil Drawing Institute.

An interview with the artist can be found at menil.org/marcbauer

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