

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### TORKWASE DYSON JOINS GRAY

Gray is pleased to announce our representation of Torkwase Dyson, joining Pace in representing the artist. Gray's first solo exhibition with Dyson will take place in Chicago in the fall of 2023.

Working across the disciplines of painting, drawing, installation and sculpture, Torkwase Dyson distills and examines the crosscurrents of ecology, architecture and infrastructure to envision new modes of environmental and spatial liberation.

Through a process of intensive research into the built and natural environment, Dyson's practice explores the ways in which Black and brown people navigate, negotiate and negate existing systems. In her interrogation of space, Dyson has developed a distinct visual lexicon of geometric shapes. The trapezoid, scalene triangle, square and curve that she deploys, while abstract by design, are drawn from historical narratives of what the artist calls "Black spatial genius." For instance, in developing her "Hypershapes" series, Dyson drew the curve of a ship hull to reference the self-liberation of Anthony Burns; rectangular shapes envisioning the crate in which Henry "Box" Brown shipped himself to freedom; and triangular volumes culled from the attic crawl space where Harriet Jacobs found escape. The artist reorients, shifts and layers these powerful forms to produce rich compositions in drawing, painting and sculpture.

The use of water is also central to Dyson's practice, evidenced in the flow of paint on her canvases or the reflective surfaces of her sculpture. A certified diver, Dyson has journeyed underwater around oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico and studied how water pathways like the Middle Passage and the Mississippi River have shaped migration. This research has informed an evolving theory she has titled "Black Compositional Thought," which Dyson explains "considers how paths, freeways, waterways, architecture and geographies are composed by black bodies and how properties of energy, space and objects interact as networks of liberation."

Torkwase Dyson's interest in environmental and spatial liberation is not limited to a traditional studio practice, and importantly involves participants and collaborators. She has created projects such as *Studio South Zero (SSZ)* (2016) a solar-powered mobile studio for learning and making art about the environment or the roving pedagogical site *The Wynter-Wells Drawing School for Environmental Liberation* (2018-present). In *I Can Drink the Distance* (2019) and *Liquid a Place* (2021), she built sculptural, architectural installations as a platform for collaboration with other artists, dancers and thinkers including Arthur Jafa, Dionne Brand and Christina Sharp. Throughout her work, Dyson addresses issues of environmental justice, seeking to create a blueprint for a more equitable future.

Gray will exhibit Torkwase Dyson's work for the first time at Art Basel Miami Beach in December 2021. For her first solo exhibition at Gray Chicago in Chicago in fall of 2023, Dyson will present a site-specific project focused on her research into Chicago's waterways.

On the occasion of the announcement, Torkwase Dyson reflects: "Every move, every step — I am always thinking about and imagining all of the spaces where people, Black people in particular, headed toward and moved to save themselves. With different geographies, there are different elevations to deal with. Chicago has personal meaning to me and is also fertile ground for my ongoing research and studio practice into water and spatial liberation. I am thrilled to have the support of Gray gallery in this quest."

"Dyson describes painting as an act of liberation, an effort to connect to ancestors, an exploration of space and specifically Black spaces," comments Gray principal Paul Gray. "In her first serious critique as a student, Dyson was told, 'You can paint, so what?' This question seems to loom large, for in my visits with her in the studio, as in her time underneath the waves, there always seems to be more she is searching for. She's driven by curiosity, yes, but even more so it seems, by a sense of exquisite responsibility to answer that question, 'So what?' with ever more profound images."

**Torkwase Dyson** (b. Chicago, 1973, works in Beacon, NY) studied sociology, social work, and fine art at Tougaloo College, Mississippi; she received a BFA in painting from Virginia Commonwealth University and Masters in Fine Arts in Painting from Yale School of Art. Her work has been the focus of solo exhibitions at New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana; Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine; Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago; Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, Philadelphia; Suzanne Lemberg Usdan Gallery, Bennington College, Vermont; The Hall Foundation, Schloss Derneburg, Germany; and Serpentine Galleries, London. Group exhibitions include The Studio Museum in Harlem, The Whitney Museum of American Art, and The Drawing Center, New York; Corcoran College of Art and Design, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C.; and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio, among others. Torkwase Dyson will present a new, commissioned work for the upcoming group exhibition *A Movement in Every Direction: Legacies of the Great Migration* at the Mississippi Museum of Art and Baltimore Museum of Art (2022).

For press inquiries, please contact Rebecca Daniel Mottley, [rdm@richardgraygallery.com](mailto:rdm@richardgraygallery.com)