

Pilar Corrias

Press Release

Gisela McDaniel
Soil, Sea & Sound
17 July–27 September 2025

Pilar Corrias
Online



Gisela McDaniel, *Na'rosa (to make pink)*, 2025. Courtesy the artist and Pilar Corrias, London

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Pilar Corrias is pleased to present *Soil, Sea & Sound*, an online exhibition of new work by the Indigenous CHamoru/Pasifika artist Gisela McDaniel. This body of paintings was begun during the artist's residency at the Inaugural Art Explora – Cité internationale des Arts in Paris, 2024.

Soil, Sea & Sound builds upon McDaniel's existing practice of embedding 'consensual artifacts' gifted from subject-collaborators which carry direct traces of (their) lived experiences. These objects range from broken or mismatched jewelry, rosary beads to wisdom teeth. Adorning vivid lush backgrounds featuring tropical foliage, McDaniel pairs her subjects and their surroundings with audio excerpts of conversations 'talking story' with the artist.

With maternal roots in the northwestern Pacific island of Guam (Guåhan) in Micronesia, McDaniel's distinctive aesthetic practices are shaped by Oceanic cosmologies, which view natural, supernatural and human entities as interdependent, kindred beings bound together by sacred, enduring obligations and a collective genealogy. Drawing upon traditional legends which amplify matrilineal CHamoru culture – both ancient and contemporary – this presentation expands McDaniel's interest in exploring the literal and figurative role which land (soil), sea (via marine life) and sound (talking story) play in understanding the undulating rhythms shaping the contemporary lives and challenges to the identities of Pasifika and non-Pasifika women of colour.

The five larger portraits featured in this presentation are meditations on the subversive wit, ingenuity and protective solidarity of contemporary women of colour living in New York City. Protected by the sacred halom tåno (jungle) that shades and surrounds them, McDaniel suggests an embodied and organic connection to the land from which her subjects seemingly grow out of/into. The destructive legacy of nuclear testing in the nearby Marshall Islands and throughout Oceania is remembered through McDaniel's dominant colour palette, comprising deeply saturated ('blood') reds and pinks. Some of the latter hues are injected with neon pigments, calling to mind the deadly aftermath of nuclear bombs on direct targets in the Marshallese Republic as well as islands, peoples and marine life situated 'downwind'. Unsustainable pressures continue on already strained island infrastructures, caused by the climate emergency, population increases and environment changes. Such pressures provide

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context for shared and distinct global pressures faced by Indigenous women of colour and femmes living thousands of miles away.

Many of the small portraits presented in *Soil, Sea & Sound* introduce a new element and direction for McDaniel. Blowing into a large conch shell, kulo' (in CHamoru) and pū (in Hawaiian), is a feature of many sacred ceremonies in CHamoru culture, honouring dignitaries across Oceania. In McDaniel's work the kulo' evokes ancestral memory and technology and honours unbroken, if not always known or acknowledged, continuity between ancient CHamorus and their descendants. It serves as a sonic bridge between generations and as an extension of the breath and will of the body. Like our bodies, shells carry life and histories, from battlegrounds to welcomings, from survival to celebrations.

Found objects from Pasifika feature across this body of work – including pigments and soil McDaniel's sourced by hand during a recent trip to Guam, Kiribati-inspired pufferfish helmets used by ancient Micronesian warriors and Papua Guinean-inspired masks created by the Sepik people.

Gisela McDaniel (b.1995, Nebraska, USA) lives and works in New York City. A solo exhibition by the artist will open at Ogunquit Museum of American Art, USA, in August 2025. Recent solo and group shows include: *Some Dogs Go to Dallas*, Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, US (2024); *(Re)Work It! Women Artists on Women's Labor*, Mattatuck Museum, Waterbury, US (2024); *The inescapable interweaving of all lives*, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf (2023); *Tender Loving Care*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston (2023); *Thinking of You*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2023); *Manhaga Fu'una*, Pilar Corrias, London (2022); *A Place for Me: Figurative Painting Now*, ICA Boston (2022); *The Regional*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City (2022); *Sakkan Eku LA*, The Mistake Room, Los Angeles (2021); *How Do We Know the World?*, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore (2021) and *Making WAY/FARING Well*, Pilar Corrias, London (2020).

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