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PUBLIC ART FUND PRESENTS FELIPE BAEZA’S HYBRID FORMS EXPLORING DISPLACEMENT, SPIRITUALITY, AND TRANSFORMATION

Felipe Baeza: Unruly Forms
August 9–November 19, 2023
JCDecaux Bus Shelters
Citywide throughout New York, Chicago, Boston in the United States, and Mexico City, León, Querétaro in Mexico

August 7, 2023, NEW YORK, NY—Opening on August 9, Public Art Fund presents Unruly Forms, a series of eight new and recent paintings by Felipe Baeza. These artworks are displayed on over 400 JCDecaux bus shelters and street furniture across New York, Chicago, and Boston in the United States, as well as in Mexico City, León, and Querétaro in Mexico. The exhibition marks Public Art Fund’s first exhibition in Mexico, as well as the
artist's first public art presentations in Chicago, Boston, and Mexico. Drawing on Baeza’s research into Mesoamerican artifacts in museum collections across New York City, Chicago, and Boston, *Unruly Forms* considers how the collection, displacement, and display of these objects shifts their energetic properties. The installation of the series on bus shelters in the cities where these artifacts are held acts to reanimate their power and life within new contexts. Marrying elements of painting, collage and printmaking, Baeza’s intricately worked images of hybrid anthropomorphic forms explore displacement, spirituality, and metamorphosis.

Pictured in various iterations of suspension, emergence, release, and transformation, Baeza’s figures hum with power and movement, suggesting that the mythic potency of artifacts does not cease when collected by a museum, but rather remains in a constant state of becoming. *Unruly Forms* brings materiality to the metaphysical, with complex, built forms that evoke a dream of transcendence beyond a single body and place, creating space for mystical reinvention.

“There’s an astonishing power in Felipe Baeza’s indelible, iconic images. They radiate with the authority of ancient knowledge while also belonging squarely to the present,” said Public Art Fund Artistic & Executive Director Nicholas Baume. “Baeza’s riveting new compositions, imbued with the physicality of his elaborate technique, speak across histories and cultures to the spectrum of human imagination and desire.”

Born in Guanajuato, Mexico, and based in Brooklyn, NY, Felipe Baeza’s sensually rich works evoke both mythic dimensions and contemporary themes. Through collage, embroidery, and painting, Baeza’s materially and conceptually layered works on paper incorporate photographic images, and pigmented paper to depict and animate fragmented bodies. His work investigates otherness, agency, and transformation through the body in flux, exploring how one might thrive and flourish in response to prescribed circumstances and challenges. For *Unruly Forms*, Baeza carries forward this investigation, incorporating the impacts of social and cultural institutions on the individual, as well as experiences of migration and queerness.

“My practice has always been interested in fugitive bodies—those that remain in a state of constant becoming and traverse socially constructed borders,” said artist Felipe Baeza. “*Unruly Forms* extends this interrogation into the life, movement, and metamorphosis of objects, which originate from Mesoamerica but now find themselves in institutions and collections far from their original context, form, and function. The reconsideration and transformation of these objects in this series is lent another layer with their multiplication, magnification, and display in hundreds of public bus shelters.”

*Unruly Forms* explores how objects with multifaceted cultural and spiritual significance are decontextualized and stripped of meaning through the acts of collection, preservation, and display by museums. Baeza’s ongoing research into Mesoamerican art and artifacts, a focus of his recent residency at the Getty Research Institute, serves as a springboard for this series of paintings. He filters the essence and forms of figurines, vessels, and masks through his
distinctive visual language—treating these objects as armatures for power, energy, and ritual. Fusing elements of these artifacts with body parts, religious iconography, vegetal forms, and anthropomorphic fragments, Baeza’s compositions celebrate metamorphosis and hybridity. In a muted and organic palette with intricate fragments and rich textures, the physicality and detail of these visually arresting artworks invite close engagement, revealing elements of printmaking, collage, and drawing.

The collages feature iconic forms that are at once ancient and contemporary, protected and exposed, human and mystical. An assemblage of various organic materials and fragments, the forms hold multiple states of being, evading a single identification. With arms outstretched—beckoning, surrendering, or blessing—the beings’ poses, central placements, and symmetry evoke depictions of religious icons and deities, lending the works a spiritual quality. Repeated throughout the works are motifs such as thorns and tentacles, which highlight the process of growth and survival within both native and non-native environments. The presence of thorns and armor create structures of protection for these entities, pointing to the ways that individuals and objects adapt for the sake of preservation and come to thrive under states of instability.

Felipe Baeza: Unruly Forms is curated by Public Art Fund Artistic & Executive Director Nicholas Baume with support from Assistant Curator Jenée-Daria Strand.

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WHEN & WHERE: Unruly Forms is on view on over 400 JCDecaux bus shelters and street furniture in New York City, Chicago, and Boston in the United States and Mexico City, León, and Querétaro in Mexico August 9, 2023 through November 19, 2023.

Locate artworks in your neighborhood with our online map or with the new geolocation feature on the free Bloomberg Connects app, which also includes exclusive audio content from the artist and curator.

ABOUT THE ARTIST
Felipe Baeza (b. 1987, Guanajuato, Mexico) works and lives in Brooklyn, NY. Fusing collage, painting, printmaking, and other techniques to create multilayered, textural works that explore notions of the body and migration, Baeza’s sensually rich and visually arresting works evoke both mythic dimensions and contemporary themes. His figures created over densely layered paintings appear in different states of becoming and at times are even abstracted to the point of invisibility.

Baeza’s recent group exhibitions include: The Milk of Dreams, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (2022); Prospect 5. New Orleans: Yesterday We Said Tomorrow, New Orleans (2021); and Desert X, Palm Springs (2020). Baeza’s recent solo
exhibitions include: Made Into Being, Fortnight Institute, New York (2022); Unruly Suspension, Maureen Paley, London (2021); and Through the Flesh to Elsewhere, the Mistake Room, Los Angeles (2020). Baeza’s works are in the public collections of Columbus Museum of Art, LACMA, Moderna Museet, North Carolina Museum of Art, and San Jose Museum of Art. Baeza is the recipient of a Latinx Artist Fellowship by the U.S. Latinx Art Forum, Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant and completed residencies at NXTHVN and the Getty Research Institute. Baeza received a BFA from the Cooper Union and an MFA from Yale.

ABOUT PUBLIC ART FUND
As the leader in its field, Public Art Fund brings dynamic contemporary art to a broad audience in New York City and beyond by mounting ambitious free exhibitions of international scope and impact that offer the public powerful experiences with art and the urban environment.

ABOUT JCDECAUX
The JCDecaux Group is the number one outdoor advertising company worldwide, reaching more than 850 million people daily in over 80 countries and 3,518 cities. JCDecaux is working towards more sustainable spaces and is recognized for its extra-financial performance in the FTSE4Good (3.6/5), CDP (A Leadership), MSCI (AA), and has achieved Gold Medal status from EcoVadis. In the U.S., the JCDecaux program includes airports, billboards, malls, as well as street furniture programs in New York, Chicago, and Boston, and in Mexico, JCDecaux is present across all 32 states and in over 350 cities with street furniture, billboards, transit and mall programs.

SUPPORTS
Bloomberg Philanthropies is the presenting sponsor of Felipe Baeza: Unruly Forms.

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MEDIA CONTACTS:
Natasha Roberts | nroberts@publicartfund.org
Christine Zheng | czheng@publicartfund.org

IMAGE CREDITS:
Felipe Baeza
*Let yourself fall*, 2023
Photo: Nicholas Knight, courtesy Public Art Fund, NY.
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