ALMINE RECH

Genesis Tramaine
Evidence of Grace

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Almine Rech proudly presents *Evidence of Grace* by American visual artist Genesis Tramaine. This exhibition is the artist's first solo presentation in Brussels and the second with the gallery.

The paintings featured in *Evidence of Grace* serve as Tramaine's creative rumination on the many trials and tribulations that have come to define 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic, the resurgence of racial tensions in North America's mainstream discourse, and the Black Lives Matter movement that has shifted our social consciousness. Searching for a way to make sense of what she found to be troubling in our society - injustice, discrimination, and a lack of care for each other - Tramaine began her quest for answers. As Tramaine often does when faced with a problem and seeks to process events occurring in the world around her, she looks inward and engages in deep prayer. Tramaine's prayers provided a spiritual spark that catalyzed the creation of the paintings in *Evidence of Grace.* These paintings are a visual 'sermon' that articulates her faith, amplifies her relationship with God, and provides a sanctuary for a world in need of healing.

Genesis Tramaine is a devotional painter who produces work that adroitly intertwines figurative and abstract mark-making into the pictorial plane resulting in the cultivation of a unique visual vocabulary. Every brushstroke is channeling the pain, fear, anguish, optimism, and joy that we all feel as human beings but can't always articulate. Looking at a Genesis Tramaine painting is a reminder of what it means to be ALIVE, PRESENT, and connected to the sacred. Her work requires a different kind of viewing that encapsulates the importance of history, the power of religion, and the metamorphic impact that visual art can have on society.

Evidence of Grace is a creative escalation for Genesis Tramaine, imbued with a new level of pictorial movement resulting in a series of visually arresting paintings that continue to present the artist's ideas, meditations, and expression of faith. The body of work exhibited in *Evidence of Grace*, arguably Tramaine's best, serves as an inflection point in her practice. The pictures highlighted in the exhibition are bursting with color, vibrating with rich line quality, and reflect the production of an artist who is genuinely in-tune with their creative capacity. The pieces featured in the exhibition are larger in scale, bolder contours, and showcase Tramaine's journey towards mastery as a painter. As a self-identified Black Queer Female Bodied painter from Brooklyn, Tramaine finds shelter from the world's ills through prayer, song, movement, and painting. The act of painting is a cathartic space to commune with God and deepen her spiritual connection. Through this ritual, Genesis transcends into the flow of painting as a divine vessel that engages with the canvas.

The flash of the spirit has set the foundation for the artworks that Tramaine creates, filled with chromaticity and energetic linework that has come to define her oeuvre. The linework evokes the urban landscape and spaces that have shaped Tramaine's identity growing up in Brooklyn. Often oscillating between hard and soft marks, her drawings within the portraits that she constructs is crucial in her painting. These marks necessitate the viewer to look closer with a keen eye at the layers upon layers that encompass each work in the exhibition as they have something new to reveal to those who actively engage the work. This exhibition is evidence of Tramaine's growth, artistic conviction, and understanding of the transformative power of contemporary art to guide us from the "darkness to the light." *Evidence of Grace* delivers the power, majesty, and spiritual intensity needed for our society to comprehend art's ability to reframe how we see ourselves, each other, and the world around us.

Genesis Tramaine's practice is steeped in an inquiry that demands the need to trust one's intuition, faith, and creative capacity to materialize paintings that will generate a transcendental encounter for the viewer. By creating this sanctuary space with *Evidence of Grace* for the visitors of the show, Tramaine also asks them to ponder some important questions that she asks herself: *What does it mean to be a servant of God? How does one use their faculties to enable them to be a vessel to communicate, educate, and elucidate the many difficulties that impact our day-to-day lives as human beings on this earth? Moreover, during a pandemic era, when many traditional houses of faith are closed, can the "white cube" of the gallery serve as a sanctuary for people to find spiritual enlightenment and joy?* Many would deem these questions as existential queries, but these questions are part of a more profound quest for self-discovery to the keen observer. Her actions are a quest to get closer to God and the sublime with the hopes of yielding a clearer understanding of self. This crusade is a critical component that undergirds Genesis Tramaine's practice and informs the visual vernacular she has cultivated over the last several years.

For *Evidence of Grace,* Tramaine's paintings or 'Gospels,' as she refers to them are, more colorful, and the most challenging work she has made to date, enmeshed in the goal of developing an expanded visual syntax. Tramaine "was called by God to study the story of David" as a catalyst to inspire the newest body of work presented in the show. Biblical reading teaches us to engage with David as King David or via David and Goliath's allegory. Still, we rarely look at David the man, the human being, the little shepherd boy. How is a shepherd selected to lead men into battle and become a King of Nation? This point began Tramaine's journey to understand David's story and how the teachings of that story would be manifested into a series of breathtaking 'portraits' that are highlighted in *Evidence of Grace.* Moreover, David's story was a catalyst that encouraged Tramaine to grapple with the question of: *What does it mean to be chosen by God?* Tramaine's adroit ability to dissect our daily lives' peculiarities and create multiple entry points into her work via her portraits is an extraordinary talent enabling the viewer to engage with her work on an aesthetic or spiritual level.

When one views a Genesis Tramaine painting, there is a demand for the full commitment of mind, body, and soul. She isn't taking a traditional approach to contemporary art-making in 2020. Tramaine is cultivating an artistic practice that operates at the intersection of religion and the cultural zeitgeist to shape up a new canonical discourse. Expressed via the eyes, mind, and hands of a Black woman, Tramaine creates visual 'sermons' that invites the viewer to pause, reflect profoundly, reassess themselves, and the world around them. The large-scale canvas works Tramaine constructs envelop the viewer facilitating the intimacy of experience that provides an insight into some of Tramaine's conversations with God through her prayers.

Evidence of Grace will transform Almine Reich's Brussel's gallery into a place of refuge from the ills of the world. Through her work in the exhibition, the sermon she offers is a call-to-action for viewers to open-up their awareness and feel what it means to be in the presence of divine energy through visual art. The paintings in this exhibition encompass a visual skill that only comes with experience cultivating your craft. The layering of the "portrait within a portrait" featuring visual signifiers like fish, birds, and other animals indicates a closer alignment to spirit and faith. The repetitious mark-making on pictorial planes coupled with the sensuous forms that serve as the outline to the portraits are a seductive combination that appeals to the soul.

- Larry Ossei-Mensah (Curator and Co-Founder of Artnoir)