

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**The Montclair State University Galleries Announces  
Nothing Under Heaven by Joseph Liatela  
On View September 13 – December 09, 2022**

**New and recent works by Joseph Liatela, alongside Andy Warhol (1928-1987) and Carlo Dolci (1616-1686), explore connection, pleasure, and agency within oppressive systems.**



*To Move Is To Remember*, 2022. Live performance. Dancers: Héctor Cerna and Chris Tabassi.  
Photo by Whitney Browne.

Montclair, NJ — The Montclair State University Galleries will present the exhibition *Nothing Under Heaven* by Joseph Liatela from September 13 through December 9, 2022. The exhibition will be on view at the University Galleries' newly reconfigured flagship exhibition space, the George Segal Gallery.

The artist's first solo museum exhibition brings together new commissions and recent works that explore the need for connection, pleasure, and agency within oppressive systems. Exhibited alongside photography by Andy Warhol (1928-1987) and religious art by Carlo Dolci (1616-1686) from the University Galleries' collection, Liatela invokes a range of stories to assess what it means to move together, remember together, and repair together.

In *Nothing Under Heaven*, Liatela correlates spaces of communal experience – churches, medical institutions, and clubs – where promises of salvation and healing commingle in proximity to loss and grief. By uniting these different spaces through a range of mediums and interdisciplinary analysis, Liatela reveals how these seemingly disparate environments hold similar contradictions that impact the way we perceive ourselves and each other.

Within the exhibition, the search for absolution in a Church, the potential for restoration through medical care, and the rapturous escapism of the club become entangled. Liatela also unites ideologies of the afterlife - the veneration of patron saints, possibilities of dancing with the ghosts of lost loved ones, and the lingering specter of death in hospitals - to further pronounce their similarities while making their differences visible as well.

This tension is explored in relation to the complexities of a medical system that is heavily biased and inaccessible despite being positioned as a system of care. Liatela also draws correlations between devotion, salvation, punishment, and pleasure through sculptures that invoke the visual languages of both the nightclub and Catholic objects designed to put the body into a position of worship. Similarly, Liatela frames the club as a necessary site of gathering and communion with queer ancestral lineages in response to marginalization. In searching for more moments of reprieve and solidarity within these larger systems, Liatela finds company with his chosen ancestors Andy Warhol, the Archangel Gabriel who has historically been depicted without a fixed gender (painted by Carlo Dolci), and James Baldwin to whom the title of the exhibition pays homage. By giving visual form to the simultaneous yet dichotomous conditions explored within the exhibition, Liatela distills a complex network of emotional, spiritual, and bodily experiences.

The exhibition is curated by Jesse Bandler Firestone, Curator and Exhibition Coordinator of the University Galleries.

“In connecting aspects of religious belief, healthcare, and underground spaces, Liatela presents the opportunity to reorient our understanding of how these fields relate,” Firestone said. “The ecstatic joy shared on the dance floor, the yearning for salvation in a church, and the discomfort or alienation felt in the waiting room at a hospital are all blurred and recategorized. These emotional experiences are meant to be contemplated and moved through.”

Among the highlights of the exhibition are:

- *To Move Is To Remember*, 2022, looks at the club as a site where absence and collective movement are united with joy and rapture. Liatela notes that grief and celebration are simultaneously embodied, processed, and expressed through movement on the dancefloor.
- *On being an idea (the right to live without permission)*, 2019, features copies of the 4th edition “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders” where “gender identity disorder” was still listed as an acceptable diagnosis. The books are bound by rope and address how a diagnosis can impact the body and shape what is considered deviant.

## **Publication**

A fully-illustrated digital publication will be available.

## **Gallery Hours**

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, 12 – 5 p.m.

Thursday, 12 – 7 p.m.

Open on select Saturday's of the month and by appointment.

## **Programs & Events**

### *Opening Reception*

Thursday, September 22, 4 – 7 p.m.

Celebrate the opening of *Nothing Under Heaven* with a live performance of *To Move Is To Remember*

Remarks by Director Megan C. Austin, Curator Jesse Bandler Firestone, and artist Joseph Liatela

### *Art Forum*

Monday, February 26, 5:30 – 8 p.m.

Artist Joseph Liatela in conversation with Curator Jesse Bandler Firestone in conjunction with Montclair State University's Art & Design program.

### *Curator's Tour*

Thursday, November 3, 1 – 2 p.m.

Join exhibition Curator Jesse Bandler Firestone in the gallery to learn more about the themes and content of the exhibition.

## **About The Montclair State University Galleries**

The Montclair State University Galleries brings together ideas, perspectives and dialogues to foster curiosity and shared understandings through art. The University Galleries presents diverse and inclusive exhibitions and programs creating connections that unite the campus experience with local and global communities. [www.montclair.edu/galleries](http://www.montclair.edu/galleries)

All exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public.

## **Social Media**

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @montclairstategalleries and using the hashtags #NothingUnderHeaven and #MontclairStateGalleries when posting.

## **Support**

This exhibition is made possible, in part, by funds from the McMullen Family Foundation, the College of the Arts and private contributions.

## **Media Contact**

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