

MONYA ROWE GALLERY

504 West 22nd Street, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10011

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For Immediate Release

LARISSA BATES

Chiquita Banana

April 28 – June 16, 2012

Opening reception: Saturday, April 28, 6 - 8 PM

In her new work, **Larissa Bates** creates an imaginary universe inspired by Gabriel García Márquez, Viennese flower plates, and Persian miniatures. Her paintings take us to tropical forests and gardens of calla lilies and introduce a new cast of characters who play out psychological dramas across the canvas. These dramas, centered around themes of family and power, deal with Bates' own family history and the complicated relationship she has with it.

Chiquita Banana explores Bates' Costa Rican heritage (her mother was *tica*) and her family's position in United Fruit, a company notorious for abusive labor practices that exploited Costa Rican citizens and stripped them of their land rights. Through the characters of the *Chiquita Banana Girl* and the *Yalie*, Bates' work problematizes her Yale-educated family's role in these neo-imperialist policies and calls forth issues of nepotism, complicity, and white privilege. However, Bates' paintings also feature nurturing, motherly characters, reminding us that family history is never one-sided. These characters refer to the artist's grandmother, who was known for bringing Montessori schools to Costa Rica and for her fight for women's rights.

At the heart of these paintings, then, there is profound ambivalence. Ambivalence towards her family's altruistic and destructive practices in Costa Rica and ambivalence towards a family who could at times be callous in business, but was tender to each other. The *MotherMan* character epitomizes this ambivalence. Depicted as a wrestler, this character is at once nurturing and warm, while at the same time athletic, heroic, and physically masculine. In their role as caregivers, struggling for pacifism, the *MotherMen* challenge gender stereotypes and reveal an interpretation of masculinity that has long been stifled by societal pressures.

Family history comes to us in fragments—from photographs, textbooks, and family stories. In *Chiquita Banana*, Bates reassembles those pieces into a fantastical universe, one that allows her to come to terms with her family's history—both the good and the bad.

- Eliza Butler, 2012

Larissa Bates received a BA from *Hampshire College*, Massachusetts. This is her fifth solo exhibition at *Monya Rowe Gallery*. Her work has recently been exhibited in group exhibitions at *Boston University*, Boston, MA; *Bakersfield Museum of Art*, Bakersfield, CA; and *Monya Rowe Gallery*. Bates recently exhibited her work in a solo exhibition at *Galería Espacio Mínimo*, Madrid, Spain. Her work will be on view at *Nassau County Museum of Art*, Roslyn Harbor, New York in a group exhibition this Spring. Bates lives and works in Providence, Rhode Island.

Eliza Butler is a PhD Candidate in the Art History Department at *Columbia University*. She is currently teaching an Art History survey course at the college and working on a dissertation entitled, "Louis Comfort Tiffany and the Nature of Color." She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Image: Larissa Bates, *Gold Leaf Wrestlers and Head Honchos and Two Baby Pilis*, 2011, gouache and gold leaf on panel, 10 by 8 inches

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday 11 - 6 PM

Upcoming: Two-Person Exhibition with Jacolby Satterwhite and Devin Troy Strother, June 22 – July 27

For more information or images please contact the gallery at 212 255 5065 or info@monyarowegallery.com

