



**THE GREAT CAMOUFLAGE  
JOIRI MINAYA**

**October 5 through November 13, 2022**

**Opening Reception:  
Wednesday, October 5 from 6 to 8 pm**

(Brookline, MA – September 19, 2022) Praise Shadows Art Gallery is pleased to present *The Great Camouflage* by Joiiri Minaya, her first solo exhibition with the gallery, featuring three new large-scale photographic collages; never before exhibited paintings, photographs, and wallpaper; and the video *Sábila / Leche*. In this exhibition, Minaya explores her relationship to changing landscapes as a migrant, a diasporic subject, all while grappling with the contested and intertwined colonial histories of the Caribbean and the Northeast United States.

A New York-born artist raised in the Dominican Republic, Minaya collects printed fabric, brochures, postcards, textures, digital imagery and much more — products of a material culture that exoticizes tropical people and spaces with the romantic visual constructions of the Global North. Concurrent in her practice is the study of plants employed by Black and Indigenous people as tools of liberation and resistance. Her celebrated public art series *The Cloaking* applies this visual vocabulary by shrouding colonial public statues in colorful “tropical” skins with patterns so subtle as to be subversive: plants used by the Black and Indigenous populations as weapons of defense.

The Atlantic Ocean binds the histories and peoples of Africa, the Caribbean, New England, and this exhibition traces those same currents of marronage, alternate mythologies and beliefs, ritual and strategic (in)visibility as vessels for redemption and empowerment. The historic figure Tituba carves her way through the exhibition at multiple points. She was an enslaved woman from Barbados who was the first person to be accused of practicing witchcraft during the Salem witch trials of 1692-1693. She was forced to confess and implicate other women, thereby validating the Puritans’ fanatical conviction that witchcraft was indeed rampant.

The 2022 work *Shield* (image above) is inspired by the early 20th century Maji Maji rebellion against Germany’s colonial regime in East Africa, located in modern day Tanzania. The rise of mystical leader Kinjikitile Ngwale and his “war medicine” were central to the alliance of indigenous tribes that resisted the colonizers. The medicine was believed to be a magical liquid, brewed from castor leaves and mtama (sorghum or millet), that promised invisibility and protection from bullets. Oral history also documents the

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practice of making turbans out of these plants. This tradition is represented in *Shield* through the rippling blue water pattern and the repetition of the cup-like castor plant on the performer's bodysuit, which she appears to be holding up in a protective manner, or attempting to remove in a moment of apparent physical tension.

The patterned bodysuit has been a motif in Minaya's work since 2015, when she began the ongoing series *Containers*, a body of work featuring women in bodysuits with stereotypical tropical prints, constructed according to poses found from Google Image searches for "Dominican women." The impact is jolting — a sudden dissociation in which one's preconceptions of the "exotic" get stripped away, deconstructed, and sometimes even erased. In *Divergences*, a series expanded in this show, Minaya explores "taking off the bodysuit" of the *Container* series as a gesture of agency and tension.

An artist's talk with Minaya is scheduled for Sunday, November 6. More information about this event will be made public by late September.

## About Joiri Minaya

Joiri Minaya (1990) is a New York-based Dominican-United Statesian multidisciplinary visual artist whose work destabilizes historic and contemporary representations of an imagined tropical identity. She studied art at the ENAV (DR), the Chavón School of Design, and Parsons. Minaya has exhibited across the Caribbean, the U.S. and internationally. She recently received a NYSCA / NYFA Artist Fellowship, a Jerome Hill Fellowship, and a NY Artadia award. She has participated in residencies at Skowhegan, Smack Mellon, LES Printshop, Socrates Sculpture Park, Art Omi, ISCP, Vermont Studio Center, New Wave, Silver Art Projects and Fountainhead, among others. Minaya's work is in the collections of the Santo Domingo Museo de Arte Moderno, the Centro León Jiménez, the Kemper Museum, El Museo del Barrio, and several private collections.

## About Praise Shadows LLC

Established in 2020, Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a commercial gallery space in the Boston area showing the work of emerging and mid-career artists.

We believe that the art ecosystem is filled with untapped potential, and our work is grounded by partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship — exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, and original concepts that no one has ever tried before. Praise Shadows Art Partners advises artists and companies in the creative industries on strategic partnerships and marketing. Our work is local, global, and virtual. [www.praiseshadows.com](http://www.praiseshadows.com)

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Artwork credit: Joiri Minaya, *Shield*, 2022, Archival pigment print, 40 x 60 inches, image courtesy the artist.