

Divine Guidance
—Christopher Y. Lew

The dancer's eyes widen into a blank stare as his head tips back slightly, his back arches, and one foot after the other lifts and steps, following the polyrhythmic drumming. The narrator of *Divine Horsemen* explains that the *loa* has “mounted” the Voudoun priest, the god-like spirit controlling and guiding his body. While highly ritualized, the priest's movements are automatic, motivated by another force.

Whether one believes that this force is divinely inspired or channeled through the subconscious, the driving force is palpable—it is one that unites the dancer and the dance. The sculptures and installations by Chitra Ganesh and Simone Leigh draw from this same energy. Leigh's floor-based work made from gravel and Kool-Aid snakes across the floor. Comprised of common materials, the work's seemingly simple gesture and form is created through an improvisational and intuitive approach that is honed through practice and repetition in the studio.

Ganesh's wall painting is structured by bands of color, from burnt reds at the top of the wall to pale yellows in the middle and oceanic blues at the bottom. While the use of broad bands of color is reminiscent of color field painting, Ganesh alludes to the colors associated to the *loa* spirits of the Voudoun pantheon. The work welcomes the viewer to create meanings and connections between the figures, swaths of color, and collaged elements.

This creative energy goes by numerous names. It is the possession of Voudoun, the zone of the athlete, the Blake-like inspiration in Christianity, the flow of the singer and rapper. It is also the grace under pressure, the unrelated made congruent, and the studied improvisation that is the art of Chitra Ganesh and Simone Leigh.