

ARTFORUM

“The Stand”

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334 Broome Street

January 13–February 26

Cobalt-blue and charcoal-colored rubber mulch cover the floor, cutting the space into two triangles of color. More ecosystem than exhibition, the artists in Prem Krishnamurthy and Anthony Marcellini’s postapocalyptic show, “The Stand,” play with light, firmament, plants, totemic forms, and animals. The show changes the doomed mood of the desert playground from *Terminator 2* to one of strange playfulness.

Here, memories of sulky-dreamy Sarah Connor’s muscled arms clinging to a chain-link fence shape-shift. The outstretched arms of a black NBA player in Paul Pfeiffer’s luminous photograph *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (07)*, 2002, points to Basquiat’s pained meditations on black resilience and black death. We see the player’s head, wearing the crown of crowd support, ultralight beamed. The black athlete, name and team number digitally removed from his jersey, is not a commodity, not Samson tumbling the pillars of spectacular captivity. The booming digital glow acts as a shield from the arena’s mob, and the death knell of racial iconography. Beneath the hallucinatory blues and yellows flaring in Connie Samaras’s archival pigment print *The Past is Another Planet: Huntington Desert Garden, Cacti; OEB 1723, Novel Fragment, Parable of the Sower, 1989, 2016*, cactus soil mixes with lines from Octavia Butler’s novel *Parable of the Sower* (1993). While the show takes its name from Stephen King’s 1978 plague novel, Butler’s story of survival yields another insight: “We haven’t even hit rock bottom yet.”

Melancholia seeds this show, as does transformation, formally and materially: Beatriz Santiago Muñoz’s video *Cinema*, 2014, made in the movie house of a dilapidated US naval base in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, loops on an iPad. Light filters into the theater through trees growing out of earth that holds undetonated bombs. Amid hysteria, dynastic decay, and clamors of uprising, “The Stand” poeticizes pluralities of living with death, playing in the US empire’s wake.



View of “The Stand,” 2017.

— Rachel Ellis Neyra