

# KAPP KAPP

Patricia Renee' Thomas: *Grapejuice*

March 6 – April 11, 2020

**Opening Reception:** Friday, March 6, 6–8 pm

Kapp Kapp, Philadelphia is pleased to announce its debut exhibition of Patricia Renee' Thomas (b. 1995). *Grapejuice* features a new body of canvases and works on paper which reflect on the artist's perceptions of the performative nature of beauty, hair, and braiding as they relate to identity. Through this suite of new works, Thomas also investigates the connection between both the physicality and duration of painting and the expression of beauty.

As Thomas puts it, she is fascinated by the laborious preparations of being "a presentable black woman." The artist's oeuvre examines the definition of beauty in Western painting, particularly through the lens of a woman of color. Hair has historically held powerful social associations and stigmas, and by underscoring these conventions Thomas questions the origin of our notions of beauty and seeks to create a more honest and respectful interpretation.

For her latest body of work, Thomas used synthetic hair to fabricate her own brushes- the same kind of hair used for braiding. Like the process of braiding, which can often take hours (sometimes days), painting can require equal amounts of toiling and attention to detail. Each painting is self-reflexive, a comment on the mechanics of painting itself and the visceral ties to, what Thomas refers to as, the "universal experience" of doing hair.

In *Mousse and Rollers*, 2020, one of Thomas's new paintings, a figure sprawled at her vanity gazes exhaustedly toward the viewer in contrast to the bright pink curlers in her hair and the beauty tools and products in the fore. The figure, a stand-in for Thomas herself, appears disinterested in their own elaborate care routine, exuding an aloofness that makes clear the subject is, at least momentarily, tired of putting in the work. Or take *Buy Two get one Free*, 2020 a new triptych, each of three panels on a narrow canvas, selected at this size because they are roughly the proportions of a hair pack. Each panel, one with a pack of faux locs and two with the same style of acrylic hair used to make her brushes, reference both the method in which the paintings were made, and, again, consider the physical ties between braiding and painting.

The artist's works on paper similarly investigate her interest in the political associations of hair and the implications from Western tradition. Each made with white conte and charcoal on ink and acrylic, Thomas credits Lorna Simpson's 1994 *Wigs* series as having heavily inspired her thought in making this new body. Each piece of Thomas's, like the many panels of Simpson's lithographs on felt, paints hair in the form of tracks, braids, and locs. With these hair pieces, which are instantly recognizable, Thomas toys with the functionality and personality of these objects. They aptly represent the very performativity and conformity Thomas seeks to reconsider.

The title of the exhibition is derived from the artist's childhood trips to the salon. While having her hair braided, Thomas's mother would give her grape juice to sip on.

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The exhibition will be on view at Kapp Kapp, Philadelphia through April 11.

**Patricia Renee' Thomas** (b.1995, Philadelphia, PA), lives and works in Philadelphia and received her BFA from the Tyler School of Art. She is a current MFA candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. She has exhibited at Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York, NY; New Image Art, Los Angeles, CA; 40<sup>th</sup> St Gallery, Philadelphia, PA; SOMArts, San Francisco, CA; and Field Projects, New York, NY. She is currently an instructor at the Tyler School of Art. In 2020, she will be included in an exhibition of the CCH Pounder Collection at The Charles H Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit, MI.

333 S. 13<sup>TH</sup> STREET PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107

(215) 309-5315 | [KAPPKAPP.COM](http://KAPPKAPP.COM)