

# THE DAILY GAZETTE

WHEN CREDIBILITY MATTERS

SCHENECTADY

## On Exhibit: Mandeville Gallery reopens with 'In the Eye of Belonging'

By Indiana Nash | August 26, 2021



PHOTOGRAPHER: INDIANA NASH

**Left:** "Afronauts and Ancestors" by Alisa Sikelianos-Carter. On view at the Mandeville Gallery as part of "In the Eye of Belonging." **Right:** "Home" by Sikelianos-Carter from the exhibit.

In a style that at times intersects with Afrofuturism, she uses present-day images of Black/brown braids and hairstyles and builds upon them using glitter and other vibrant materials.

Her work is on view at the Mandeville Gallery in an exhibit called "In the Eye of Belonging." It opened earlier this week and is slated to run through January 9, 2022. It marks the reopening of the gallery, which had been closed to the public because of the pandemic.

Sikelianos-Carter's shimmering pieces are a good note to begin on.

A graduate of the University at Albany, Sikelianos-Carter is a mixed-media painter, a 2021 Foreland Studio Follow and a 2020 Sustainable Arts Foundation recipient. Her work has been exhibited locally and internationally, including in the Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery in London.

At one end of “In the Eye of Belonging” is a sweeping piece titled “Afronauts and Ancestors,” featuring two figures; one is golden with a white halo etched above the head, and the other is black and covered with winding vine-like patterns. The latter’s head is made of images of intricately braided black, purple and brown hair.

In her artist statement, Sikelianos-Carter writes that she “envisions a cosmically bountiful world that celebrates and pays homage to ancestral majesty, power and aesthetics.”

“Through her exploration of opulent, luminescent materials she is creating a mythology that is centered on Black resistance and uses the body as a site of alchemy and divinity,” the statement later reads.

Much of the exhibit is focused on hair, with web and catalog images of complex hairstyles, intertwining and overlapping to create an entirely new style. In certain works, like “Moonwalker,” in between the braids, the scalps of the featured heads are colored with bright green, silver and purple glitter, shimmering as one walks by them.

Elsewhere, larger-scale paintings seem to further map out the mythologies and patterns that Sikelianos-Carter references in “Afronauts and Ancestors.” In the rich, black landscape of “Look at Me #7,” winding and intersecting grey lines create indistinct shapes, with a subtle dark glitter in the center of them. “In the Shape of My Memory #2” similar shapes abound, only these are created with blue, yellow, pink and purple lines, featured in a pale pink background. At the bottom edge, small hands wave up out of a dark, twisting mass. There’s an eeriness to the piece, especially in the small motion of those hands.

Not too far away is a piece titled “Home,” featuring three scalps with glittering halos floating in among silver clouds and a mountainous landscape below. The center is an amorphous black shape, filled with subtle imprints of braided patterns.

“In the Eye of Belonging” uses opulent materials and familiar patterns to imagine powerful new symbols and stories. There will be a reception and discussion with Sikelianos-Carter from 5-6:30 p.m. on Oct. 5. The Mandeville Gallery is located in the Nott Memorial on the Union College campus. Hours are 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. daily. For more visit [www.union.edu/gallery](http://www.union.edu/gallery).