



Kelly Sinnapah Mary, *The Book of Violette: Lydia and Lydie*, 2025,
Acrylic on canvas, 18 1/8 x 15 in (each), 46 x 38 cm (each).

43 RUE DE MONTMORENCY | PARIS, FRANCE | OCT 20 – 26, 2025

Kelly Sinnapah Mary

Tout germe encore dans la nuit des terres

James Cohan is pleased to present *Tout germe encore dans la nuit des terres*, an exhibition of new paintings by Kelly Sinnapah Mary, on view at 43 Rue de Montmorency from October 20 through October 26, 2025. The gallery will host a VIP preview with the artist on Monday, October 20, 2025, from 10 AM to 6 PM.

Kelly Sinnapah Mary's ongoing series *The Book of Violette* is an evolving visual notebook within which remembrance and imagination intertwine. Under her gaze, memory becomes a vibrant terrain—one where ancestral stories, ecological harmony, and intimate ties are inscribed side by side. Sinnapah Mary's work is rooted both materially and narratively in the artist's immediate environment of the Caribbean archipelago of Guadeloupe, a French overseas department, and her own evolving understanding of her ancestral origins. This landscape, with its verdant forests and mangroves, consistently serve as both character and metaphor: as Sinnapah Mary transfigures her personal history into fantastical narratives, she underscores issues of colonialism, and the Anthropocene.

Sinnapah Mary finds resonance in the work of intellectuals, such as Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* and *La Lézarde*, in which identity is imagined as a fluid archipelago of enmeshed lives and histories. The exhibition title, which takes inspiration from Glissant, conveys a quiet form of political and cultural resistance, in which new identities continue to emerge and flourish beneath the surface. Many of the characters in her paintings inhabit this relational space, tethered to plants, ancestors, and Caribbean narratives. They emerge not as isolated figures, but as one voice among many, a vibration woven into the living fabric of the world.

In Sinnapah Mary's hands, surrealism is a means to create an evolution of characters and becomes both a strategy of imaginative thinking and a way of traversing the semi-autobiographical figures. In *The Book of Violette: Lydia and Lydie*, 2025, the artist portrays her mother, Lydia, the eldest of ten siblings, alongside her aunt Lydie, the youngest. The two share a striking resemblance—often dressed alike and mirroring each other's gestures—embodying the intimacy of family bonds. Tattooed with local flora and fauna, they transcend individuality to become anchors of a living legacy. Through their likeness, Sinnapah Mary evokes how identity is shaped from generations of shared stories, gestures, and memories. Lydia and Lydie stand not only as sisters, but as guardians of a living story.

The Book of Violette: Ritual, 2025, reflects Sinnapah Mary's early curiosity about Hindu practices that originated with Indian indentured servitude in the Caribbean. Born into a family of Jehovah's Witnesses, the artist was raised with strict religious discipline, in which exploring other faiths was discouraged. Here, she begins to encounter and engage with rituals and beliefs previously unfamiliar to her. Sinnapah Mary tattoos the surface of the woman's face with botanical iconography and figural scenes evoking Hindu customs that she observed as a child, including *kali-kouli*—a goat offering to the deities—and *sanblani*, a ceremony honoring the dead.

In these paintings, Sinnapah Mary's female protagonists carry ancestral knowledge, initiated into the secrets of plants and the dead. In their convergence, these heroines converse across time, myth, and autobiography. Together, they embody a reimagining of rebellious black female figures—keepers of resilience and agents of transformation.

Kelly Sinnapah Mary (b. 1981, Guadeloupe) holds a degree in visual art from Toulouse University. Her work has been shown both in Guadeloupe and internationally at institutions including Aicon Gallery, New York, NY; Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam, Netherlands; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; IDB Gallery, Washington, DC; Osage Foundation, Hong Kong; Fondation Clément, Le François, Martinique, and the 34th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil. She has been featured in major group exhibitions including *The Earth, The Fire, The Water and The Winds: For a Museum of Errantry with Édouard Glissant*, at Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, Brazil and *Non-Residency*, at Jaipur Centre for Art, Jaipur, India, both in 2025; *Surrealism and Us: Caribbean and African Diasporic Artists since 1940*, at the Modern Museum of Fort Worth, TX, in 2024; *everything slackens in a wreck*, curated by Andil Gosine, at the Ford Foundation Gallery, New York, in 2022, and *Very Small Feelings* at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, India, in 2023.

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