

Ajay Kurian

Nine Flags

October 26 – November 9, 2018

Ajay Kurian's *Nine Flags* consist of nine wall-mounted sculptures based on the dimensions of the U.S. flag. Departing from its familiar stars and stripes, these flags feature distorted tessellations reminiscent of reptilian scales or cracked, dehydrated earth. In each work, the surface sheds the prior flag's skin to reveal a new one below. Taken together, they suggest a depth beneath the sculpted contour's shallow relief, as if each individual work carries the growing heft of the overall body's changes.

As disfigured, dynamic abstractions, they embody symbolic decay and rebirth, while as pictures, they operate as surfaces on which to project political and social metamorphosis. The shedding of each skin, the changing of scales, and the shifts in flow and pattern all maintain that the contraction of one image and body leads to the expansion of the next. Within their vibrancy and decay are the contortions of change without resolution. The flags multiply, evoking viral reproduction, as well as the catalytic energy of individual bodies proliferating to create a social whole. Yet, in the discontinuity of their design, they eschew any clear national representations and evoke a more fluid and complex conception of collective identity. While today this fluidity seems momentarily dammed, the renegotiations of nationhood, citizenship, and home are already underway.

Ajay Kurian (b. 1984) currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He received his BA from Columbia University in 2006. He has had solo exhibitions at CAPRI, Düsseldorf; White Flag Projects, St. Louis; Rowhouse Project, Baltimore; Artspeak, Vancouver; Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai; and Audio Visual Arts, New York. He has exhibited work in group exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Øregård Museum, Copenhagen; Art Commissions GI on Governor's Island, New York; MoMA PS1, New York; the Fridericianum, Kassel; Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City; and White Columns, New York. His work is included in public collections including the Aishti Foundation Collection, Beirut, Lebanon and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.