

# THE ART NEWSPAPER

## JUNE 18, 2021

### THREE EXHIBITIONS TO SEE IN LONDON THIS WEEKEND

by Kabir Jhala



Alvaro Barrington's *Street dreams are made of basketball* (2021)

*Alvaro Barrington: Drug Culture: Vol ii. Trust your local drug dealer and My words will live forever-Fuck my Name*  
Until 17 July, Emalin, 1 Holywell Lane, EC2A 3ET

The past 18 months have been a busy time for Alvaro Barrington, who has not one but two solo shows at Emalin. In the gallery's main space are painting and concrete-based works, including *Street dreams are made of basketball* (2021). On the frame of a canvas criss-crossed with coloured thread Barrington has placed a basketball inside a plastic crate. A taut metal chain extends like a spine from the crate to a hulking slab of concrete at the work's base, linking together the urban and the domestic spheres. An accompanying series of small, figurative acrylic-on-textile paintings based on Tiktoks bear hurried daubs of bright colours to evoke the immediate and ephemeral nature of a one minute-long video. In one, a Black figure raises their hand: it is unclear whether this is part of a choreographed viral dance move or a symbol of political resistance.

In a second space a two minute walk away, Barrington is showing a series of imposing mixed-media works on whose concrete facades he has scrawled lyrics from the debut album of the late American rapper DMX. No stranger to borrowing from other artists, Barrington merges DMX's reflections on growing up poor in New York City with the childlike nature of mark making in wet cement to reflect on questions of ownership and industrialisation during the 1990s—a time of significant gentrification within the city. Embedded inside these dense, rough concrete frames are smaller acrylic paintings that invite a second, more intimate viewing experience.