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451 N Paulina Street, Chicago 60622
312 243 2129 moniquemeloche.com

NEW CITY ART

Emotive States: A Review of Chase Hall and February James at Monique Meloche

AUGUST 7, 2020 AT 7:00 AM BY CAIRA MOREIRA-BROWN



"We Laugh Loud So The Spirits Can Hear," February James (2020). Installation view/Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery

Two solo exhibitions, "We Laugh So The Spirits Can Hear" by February James and "Half Note" by Chase Hall, are at Monique Meloche, immersing the viewer in two separate emotional atmospheres.

Both shows touch on current human environments and familial history, offering an internal dialogue around identity. "We Laugh So The Spirits Can Hear" and "Half Note" each survey the global pandemic.

Each piece by James and Hall is charged with the raw and curious emotions that many of us have when thinking about a post-COVID future. The intentional and conscious stroke of pain by Hall turns a spotlight on the richness of Black America in a time of pitch blackness. You can see the direct influence of jazz via the abrupt strokes around the instruments in "The Open Door, September 13th 1953" (2020). The genre has long been a nucleus of Black excellence amid oppressive environments. Behind the purposeful brush strokes peeks the raw exposed cotton base.

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"The Open Door, September 13th 1953," Chase Hall, 2020. acrylic and coffee on cotton canvas /Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery

James' "It Takes More Than One Tool To Build A House" (2020) accomplishes a similar psychological feat but approaches the emotions from her subtle use of pigments. Her use of watercolor carries a welcoming softness in the midst of penetrating facial expressions. The comfort of these colors creates a refuge from reality as her familial references echo home. James has a unique ability to uncover hidden emotions through smudges, and contorted visuals in her works.

James and Hall manage to evoke completely different emotions with similar color palettes. Both artists manifest an educational, yet personal dialogue as it pertains to themselves and viewers' self-awareness amid COVID-19. Understanding the current narrative that exists in our society is important during isolation. Many feelings and emotions have been placed under the radar for the sake of social norms. Both artists create an environment that explores these emotions and normalizes these intimate feelings.

The challenges that we face during this pandemic have summoned a need for self-reflection but also community, as depicted in the emotional states found in the work of James and Hall. (Caira Moreira-Brown)

Chase Hall "Half Note" and February James "We Laugh So Loud the Spirits Can Hear" are on view at Monique Meloche, 451 North Paulina, through August 22.