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

Chase Hall and February James Explore Black Identity in Intimate Portraits

Two solo presentations to run concurrently at Chicago's Monique Meloche Gallery.



Chase Hall 'Beneath the Underdog' 2020

Courtesy Monique Meloche Gallery

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By Keith Estiler

Chicago-based Monique Meloche Gallery is launching two solo presentations of new works by artists [Chase Hall](#) and [February James](#). In their separate bodies of work, Hall and James immerse viewers in painterly depictions evoking their personal self-reflections of the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis.

“While varied in their methodologies, each artist’s propensity for exploring the figure enriches the recent dialogues around identity, family history, and

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the human condition. It is through this deeper understanding of the inheritances of our past and their resonance that we arrive at new insights and avenues of reflection,” stated the gallery.

February James’ exhibition “We Laugh Loud So The Spirits Can Hear” features soft portraits referencing family members and familial figures that represent a sense of “sanctuary and comfort,” as per a gallery statement. “Each portrait feels like a memory charged with the oral histories and lessons their subjects passed along, while considering how truth is conditioned by the frameworks through which it is received.”

Chase Hall unveils a new series of paintings called *Half Note* that shed light on the unceasing censorship of Black achievement and the rich legacy of Black Americans in jazz culture. Across the works, vivid portraits of Black musicians are set against warm landscapes that are reminiscent of jazz clubs — a longstanding haven for members of the Black community that offered an outlet for boundless creative expression amid racial tensions. “Each painting is deliberate; raw cotton canvas remains exposed, a form of protest against white paint as a necessary ingredient to activate surfaces.”

View select works in the slideshow above and then head to [Monique Meloche Gallery’s website](#) to learn more. Both solo presentations will run concurrently from July 11 until August 22.

Elsewhere, [take a look at our growing list of 90+ Black-owned galleries and museums to support across the globe.](#)