

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present The Bathers, an exhibition of new paintings by Chase Hall, on view in New York at 520 W. 20th St. from September 5 through October 14, 2023. An opening reception will be held on Tuesday, September 5 from 6 to 8 PM. An in-gallery conversation with Chase Hall and Daniel S. Palmer, chief curator of the SCAD Museum of Art, will take place on Thursday, September 7 at 10 AM.

The Bathers continues Hall's ongoing investigation into the complex histories of coastal regions and the ocean's depth, featuring a new body of work that addresses access and limitations to nature, leisure, public space, and Black adventurism. Hall works with a mixture of acrylic paint and brewed coffee on cotton canvas to render portraits of figures living amongst animals, playing sports, and congregating in sharply focused aquatic scenes. Using the expanse of the canvas—and drawing on his personal experiences of moving between states such as Minnesota, Illinois, Nevada, Colorado, California, and New York, where he would locate water in and around these regions—Hall complicates traditional understandings of race, class, mixedness, and geography within historically charged social landscapes with painterly rigor.

This exhibition presents new work that counters and questions art historical depictions of figures shown near bodies of water, as seen in canonical paintings by Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Henri Matisse. In these works, Hall experiments with lineages of abstraction, minimalism, and Color Field painting, prominent to artists such as Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, and Clyfford Still. Hall utilizes these art historical references and techniques to depict a range of Black figures finding joy, post victimhood, pleasure, and, ultimately, self-liberation by engaging in activities and navigating social dynamics near—or in—bodies of water across the United States. Here, he oscillates between the positive and negative space of the canvas to depict surreal, imagined

scenarios at beachside locations. By doing so, Hall offers visual stories and emotive impressions that encompass his autobiography within historical seaside regions that are sites of both displacement and world-building.

Hall's distinctive use of cotton and coffee is equally conceptual and socially relevant, referencing the historical implications of these materials that have long perpetuated unjust societal systems of power and labor. In Bather in Surf (Acting White) (2023), one of several works to exemplify his acute usage of these materials, Hall paints in a palette of deep browns and matte white, leaving sections of the unprimed cotton canvas visible throughout. Here, a torqued, nude masculine surfer rides a frothy swell defined by the empty space of the canvas. The white negative space, dotted with brown specks from the exposed cotton canvas's imperfections, accentuates the muscular physiques of his subjects and the slick, wet surfaces of the water and its waves.

While modernist and post-Impressionist depictions of bathers typically show voluptuous, white bodies lounging in a bucolic European landscape, often among wildlife, in works such as Jarvis and The Grey (2023) and Whitewash (Pelicanus Occidentalis) (2023), Hall takes a more naturalistic approach that brings forward a humanistic perspective for the love and care of the ocean and its aquatic life. In these works, the human body's relationship with water and nature is centered around a series of singular nude figures plunging and soaring through crashing waves. The subjects in Hall's compositions are often “free and exist in a world beyond the one we know.” Using fields of flat, directionally pressured shades of brown and swaths of white, Hall's visual interpretations of Black and Brown watermen are supplanted into the art historical tradition of portraying bathers, here engaged in intense moments of kinship, tension, and self-liberated renewal.

The social dynamics of adolescent beach culture, familiar to Hall's own coming-of-age in Southern California, are also key to understanding the artist's work. In [The First Day of Summer \(Initiation\)](#) (2023), a group of boys gather threateningly around a central figure who has fallen onto the sand. Strokes of green, blue, and yellow contour torsos in the shape of swim shorts, while white sections render muscular forms and strands of hair. Hall's precise use of drip-like shapes—such as the ones flowing from the chins of some of the figures—emphasize the standing figures' downward gaze, pulling the eye toward the collapsed young man being hoisted upwards with the help of a supportive friend. It's in these charged environments that Hall explores the importance of belonging, community, and independence negotiated through these leisurely activities. As a whole, the works on view in [The Bathers](#) show Hall visually foregrounding moments of inclusion and empowerment to locate his own place in these complex, and yet liberating, environments.

Chase Hall was the subject of a 2023 solo exhibition at the SCAD Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia, and was commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera to produce a large-scale artwork, the monumental diptych [Medea Act I & II](#), for its opera house in New York during its 2022–2023 season. Hall has been included in group exhibitions including [Together in Time: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection](#), Hammer Museum (2023), Los Angeles; [Black American Portraits](#), Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2021); [Young, Gifted and Black: The Lumpkin-Boccuzzi Family Collection of Contemporary Art](#), University of Illinois Chicago (2021); and [This Is America | Art USA Today](#), Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, the Netherlands. Hall has been an artist-in-residence at The Mountain School of Arts, Los Angeles; Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), North Adams, Massachusetts; and Skowhegan School for Painting and Sculpture, Maine. Hall's work is in the permanent collections of institutions including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Dallas Museum of Art; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Fondation

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Louis Vuitton, Paris; Baltimore Museum of Art; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Hall lives and works in New York where he is an adjunct professor at New York University.