

Chase Hall

Halffrican

November 8 – December 14, 2024

Los Angeles

Press Release

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to announce *Halffrican*, an exhibition of new paintings by Chase Hall. The exhibition will be on view in Los Angeles, where it will occupy three of the gallery's spaces at 5130 W. Edgewood Pl., from November 8 through December 14, 2024. An opening reception will be held on Friday, November 8 from 6 to 8 PM.

Hall has developed an expansive vocabulary for documenting the ever-shifting line between personal and generational narratives. His distinct approach to his materials, which include the staining of cotton supports with espresso and the alchemy of producing his own coffee-based pigments which have characterized his work of the last few years, reflects and critiques the ways in which systemic forces of oppression, and trade, have divided people, territory, and the physical substance of the planet itself.

As its title suggests, each painting in *Halffrican* poses a series of questions about how identities are constituted, often along lines that are not as clear as they might seem. This show includes works in a wide variety of scales, from a twenty-four-foot painting—the largest and most ambitious of the artist's career—to more intimate portraits in the style of yearbook headshots. It finds him exploring stories of freedom and friendship, as well as archetypal cycles of human development. Group portraits of young men wearing overalls and other work gear, for instance, point to the virtues of collaboration as well as an interest in creating revisionist takes on the American mythos. In many of these paintings, Hall delicately traces the line between self-reliance and participation in supportive community. He identifies how systems throughout the human and natural worlds balance competing needs for self-determination and unity, and reflects on ways in which these themes contribute to the ever-unfolding history of the United States.

The Future and the Past (God is Us) is an expansive, panoramic view of a group of Black and Brown people standing outside of a brick school. Evocative patterning defines the cohesion that animates the composition. It includes overt examples of geometric rhythm, like the patterns on the figures' clothing and the bricks behind them, but it also reveals itself in the comparatively more expressive marks that Hall uses to paint their faces, legs, and hands. The overall nature of such visual and tactile movement evokes the weaving of past, present, and future—as well as shared resilience and triumph—in the making of life (and lives) over time. Its rich array of effects emerges from Hall's negotiations with pigments, which establish yet another metaphorical link between the making of a painting and the profound role that skin pigmentation plays in the global human story.

In these ways, Hall always roots the multiple levels of criticality at stake in his work in material experimentation. Starting with his ongoing, hands-on research into the use of brewed coffee as a pigment and its interaction with cotton supports, he combines hard-won experience and a scientist's commitment to documentation and testing with a willingness to allow non-art materials to inform and even guide his process. An element of the

unknown is therefore often present, as it is when nature engages in acts that strike the imagination as aesthetically meaningful. In *Over All Else (Fireflies)* (2024), a group of boys in denim overalls are gathered at sunset in a field punctuated by the small green lights of fireflies. The whimsical and moving appearance of natural illumination seems to come as a reward for whatever labor the young men have engaged in. Hall aligns himself with his subjects, physically and figuratively. Though embedding each work with hidden gestures and personal hieroglyphics, memories and experiences are subliminally and literally mentioned as a relationship to his life lived.

Other works find the artist continuing to grapple with the tension and possibility that arise when Black men exist in white spaces. Three paintings, for instance, feature images of equestrian scenes. Here, he draws attention to the multi-layered performativity of riding, which takes place in overlapping realms of social class, interspecies connection, attire and equipment, landscape, and land ownership. These images also have important personal resonances for Hall, where, as the son of a white mother and Black father, he found himself confronting questions about what it meant to inhabit—and move between—varying worlds of racial and economic status, each with their associated levels of mobility and limitation, as well as their own languages, codes, and cultural touchstones.

As a whole, *Halfrican* is of and about this between-ness. Hall simultaneously locates it in his own autobiography; in the fertile transitional realities of art, which respond to the power struggles of external reality even as artists cultivate visions of alternate internal realities; and in the myths, failures, and potential of the American project. Throughout the show, in ways large and small, he demonstrates how thresholds, “half-way” states of being, and the human condition define our lived experience.

Mother and Child (Lauren and Henrietta) (2024) exemplifies this important facet of Hall’s ethos. A painting of the artist’s wife made during the months leading up to the birth of their first child, Henrietta, the image is full of radiant details. Some, like the wild plants and flowers that fill the scene and provide a vivid backdrop, are immediately identifiable. Others hint at the esoteric, less visible—yet no less powerful—forms that accompany new life. Among these are elements of a personal iconography that speak to other changes in his family’s life, and that correspond in equal measure to the impassioned, moment-to-moment work of painting. While the picture is founded upon Hall’s careful observation and planning, it is defined by the free-flowing inspiration that animates both its forms and its poetry, and that transforms the promise of new life—along with the complex, ultimately unfathomable, and sometimes difficult conditions of its arrival—into a symbol of continuing renewal.

Chase Hall was the subject of a solo exhibition at the SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, Georgia in 2023. In 2022, Hall 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. Hall has been included in group exhibitions including *Get in the Game: Sports, Art, Culture*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2024); *Day for Night: New American Realism*, Palazzo Barberini, organized by the Aishti Foundation, Rome (2024); *Together in Time: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2023); *Black California Dreamin’*, California African American Museum, Los Angeles (2023); *NGV Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia (2023); *Black American Portraits*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2021); *Young, Gifted and Black*:

The Lumpkin-Bocuzzi Family Collection of Contemporary Art, University of Illinois Chicago (2021); and *This Is America | Art USA Today*, Kunsthal KAdE, Amersfoort, the Netherlands (2020). 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 Louis Vuitton, Paris; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; 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.