

“Work in Progress: Chase Hall,” *Frieze.com*, July 17, 2026

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Work in Progress: Chase Hall

As the US artist finishes new paintings for Frieze Seoul 2026, he reveals some fresh inspirations and continuing love of coffee as an art material

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Chase Hall's painting practice has been hailed for its complex analysis of the Black experience in the US and its materiality, in particular his use of two commodities intrinsically linked with colonial exploitation and the transatlantic slave trade: raw cotton and coffee – a pigment Hall initially adopted out of necessity.

As he finishes a new series of paintings he is showing with David Kordansky Gallery at Frieze Seoul 2026, Hall explains how his two-year-old daughter has changed the direction and rhythm of his work, and what he's been pulling out of an ancient junkheap on his property in Upstate New York.



Chase Hall, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner. Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

Chris Waywell Where are you today? In New York?

Chase Hall I'm in New York, in the East Village. We're headed upstate today, and I'm finishing up the rest of these works there.

CW Sounds idyllic.

CH The baby, the dog, flowers, birds ... It is special; I'm super-aware of that. It's motivated my practice to blossom, to be less of a kind of yell or pointing of the finger, and more a gratitude and resonance with life. From being this lone wolf, I've become more like a grandpa tinkerer.

CW Is it harder sometimes to tackle the joyful things in life than things you have a righteous anger about?

CH Right now, it's really easy to be upset, whether that's vibrant anger or melancholy. So I like finding those moments that put rain on the soil or gas in your tank. Trying to find the positive isn't as easy as it should be, but when you can illuminate it, it goes a long way.



Chase Hall's studio, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner.
Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

CW These are the works you’re taking to Frieze Seoul?

CH Yes, a series of paintings. It’s a mix of men and women and animals: wildlife themes, adventure, kind of a quest. There are paintings with zookeepers and monkeys, a man on an island with a lion, this jester swinging from the trunk of an elephant outside this circus tent. There’s a young tourist couple with parrots on their shoulders, looking at the camera, just in this moment: this is where we are; this what we’re doing. There’s a large group portrait of Boy Scouts, this idea of archetypes versus the multiplicity of self: rudimentary steps and stages of development. How do we become who we are? I’ve been interested in this sense of being and becoming at the same time. This juxtaposition of youthfulness and growth – and how that can happen in a painting while still showing a love for paint and colour.



Chase Hall's studio, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner.
Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

CW What about materials? You are known for using coffee and raw cotton in your paintings.

CH I’ve been trying to use coffee in different ways: as landscape, as fur, as fountains and stonework, as clouds or balloons, so that the alchemy with the coffee can continue. I’ve had some awesome breakthroughs this year: using it as a collograph with a version of carborundum paste, but instead of carbon, mixing in the coffee grounds. I have been calling it ‘coffeerundum’, scraping it away, staining it, dry-rubbing it, using printmaking techniques in the paintings.

CW It feels like people often make the equation of coffee equals skin colour, and also invokes the transatlantic slave trade, but the way you’re talking about it suggests that you’re moving through that to a new place?

CH Enslavement, coffee, cotton, trade, commerce, Blackness, whiteness and hybridity: those are the meat and potatoes of my project. It's the infrastructure of the practice: I can use coffee, I can use cotton and I can use the human condition as a triangulation. With that infrastructure, I can build. For so long, it was this kind of yell I needed to get my point across: this is what I'm fighting for, this is what I believe in. Now I don't have to fight for this metaphorical permission to build, and that catalyzes me to create a language that can be more than just polarizing. It hits the points of race and history and the American condition, and Blackness and whiteness, and those are all things I've gone through in my life to be where I am today, but now, thinking about children and home and my wife and love and growth, I can't just teach my daughter about race and capitalist structures. There's more to life than that.



Chase Hall, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner. Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

CW More than 'pointing the finger', as you said?

CH 100%. Love, experience and curiosity help us understand humanity, help us find who we are and who we're becoming. Watching my daughter grow up, playing Stevie Wonder, going to the zoo: the paintings allow me to meditate on that opportunity for love and life, a deepening with ourselves, with one another. They allow me to really think about – not just run from – the daily tragedy of what we're going through.

CW It's almost the definition of an artist: one who has agency.

CH Yeah, I often think about being a cultural scientist. The lines connect to different points of evidence or ideas: some of those micro-traumas or thoughts have to be put into this filing system. Those cares start to be organized in the paintings, and through that process, I can show up better for myself, for my family, for the world.



Chase Hall, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner. Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

CW How do you think the ideas embedded in your works and materials, particularly cotton and coffee, are understood in somewhere like East Asia, where maybe an audience is not necessarily so sensitized to that narrative?

CH We have the opportunity to learn about one another, learn about our culture, see how it reflects on us, with artworks as a sort of mirror. To me, it's shamanistic: this pulling out and evoking. I don't think my job as an artist is to articulate every bit. I think of work like music. You listen to Sam Cooke talk about life in America in the mid-1900s and you can play that in another country and they'll understand the feeling for the most part. I'm making funk/soul music that you can play anywhere in the world, and people feel that rhythm. So I don't worry about it too much. My voice and the texture of my sound come from these places and histories, and I'm open to talking about them, but it's not like if you don't know why I have a twang when I say this, you won't get the song.



Chase Hall, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner. Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

CW In practical terms, you have a small child and you're moving between spaces, so what is a day in the studio like now?

CH It's changed a lot! Mornings are so precious. We'll play music, walk the dog, get a coffee, have breakfast, and then, around eight or nine, I go to the studio, come in for lunch, go back to the studio. It's a nine-to-five. Before having a kid, it was 7am to 10pm, seven days a week. But as the time for painting has shrunk, the life happening outside it has blossomed.

CW You're bringing a richer version of you to the studio?

CH Before, I really loved the athleticism of being an artist; right now, I need this every day to sort through this conundrum of growing, getting older, teaching, watching someone else grow. Painting has been this lifeline, but it's changed a lot for the better. I think I'm just getting into my stride again, understanding what it can be for me. The last two years have allowed me to excavate it and see it in a new light.



Chase Hall, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner. Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

CW Has it taught you new things about what an artist is?

CH That's an interesting question. I don't think it's taught me new things about what an artist is. For me, that's always been obvious, because it's something that poured from my heart. But it's taught me a lot about the human condition; it's taught me a lot about others, and it's turned over these really heavy stones that I've polished for a very long time.

CW Like what?

CH Growing up with single mom, I didn't know what it meant to be a father. So there's this kind of healing, cleansing of the wound. This understanding: 'This person is also someone's child.' It's taught me a lot about what people go through.

CW Has it helped you understand people's fears and anxieties?

CH Big time. I understand why people throw in the towel; I understand why people can't sleep; I understand why people don't want to leave the house. It's been a kind of end of act one, start of act two. It feels like a new adventure.



Chase Hall, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner. Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

CW Are there ways that you're starting to sense that your work might change?

CH Being upstate and having a warehouse and some land is an opportunity to not just be making paintings. I started in photojournalism, I moved into assemblage and sculpture, and I got to painting. I've been working a lot in sculpture and ceramics, trying to teach myself things. I've been trying to understand how photography could be brought back into the project. I think a lot about Rauschenberg in the way that different elements of sculpture, painting, printmaking, photography, language, performance, dance, all of those things cook together in this kind of crock pot. How coffee can be used in printmaking has been a big force for me the last five years. I've started to patinate elements of bronze with coffee grounds: how can that material continue to raise questions for me? There's a pile of scrap at the end of the property that started forming literally in the mid-1800s, and I'm finding old cars, motorcycles, Dr Pepper cans, washers and dryers from the 1940s. I've been excavating this huge dump, and I've started to reuse some of the material and rework it as this reconstruction of time.



Chase Hall, Upstate New York, 2026. Photo: Jack Platner. Courtesy: the artist and David Kordansky Gallery

CW Stuff people drag into the countryside and leave there.

CH Exactly. Literally one man's trash is another man's treasure. The place used to be a bible-binding factory and a farm for the church. There's endless proof of life and American history.

CW It's like what you referred to as an 'alchemical process': if something stays in the same place for long enough, its status and meaning change almost magically.

CH I'm so fascinated by it. Whatever is in the world is also enduring time. The hinge on your door is also having a day, and in six months, it will show its experience over the last six months. That connection feels so important to me; I never lose sight of it. We're all sharing this collective endurance. There are elements of ageing in my process. When I pull something out of the dirt, it's not shielded; it's in the open. This thing lived 60 years in the dirt and now I need to care for it.



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CW You brought it back to life; now it's your responsibility?

CH Exactly. Object advocacy involves a great responsibility. Put that little piece of sea glass in your pocket; put it on the shelf; turn it into a bracelet for your kid. I want curiosity to be this kind of rudder or engine so much more than I want the perfectionism of one painting. As I'm going through this next stage of life, I never want to lose sight of it. Keep your hand on that lightning rod. This is life, this is object, this is meaning, this is question: let that remain electric.

At Frieze Seoul 2026, Chase Hall is the subject of a solo presentation with David Kordansky Gallery (Stand B18).
