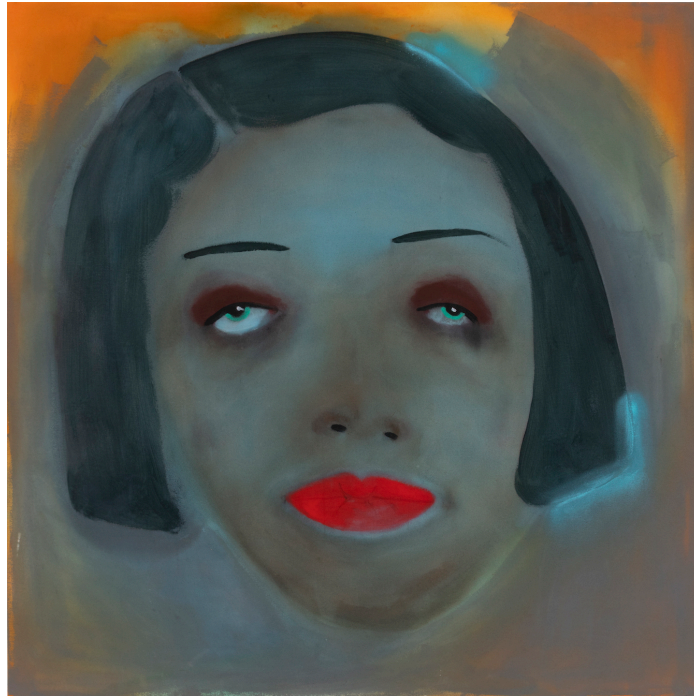


TILTON

GALLERY



February James: When the Chickens Come Home To Roost
Opening May 21st, 2021

Tilton Gallery is pleased to present “When the Chickens Come Home To Roost,” the first solo exhibition of paintings, watercolors and sculpture by February James in New York. The exhibition will open Friday, May 21st, noon to 8:00pm.

February James makes evocative portraits that respond to memory and are located at the nexus between the private self and public persona. They are both profoundly personal and non-specific, imbued with a sense of mystery that allows the viewer to engage with the work and collaborate with it to find their own interpretation.

The personas depicted are at once familiar and strange, very specific and yet have a sense of any person one could have met or sat across from on the bus and wondered about their life history. One is simultaneously totally aware of their emotional state and in awe of the mystery surrounding their being. This evasiveness is central to February James’ work and essential to its emotive quality.

Color is key to the artist’s mode of interpretation. She has said that she “uses color the way a linguist uses language.” She relishes the creative process of the unplanned, free brushstroke and approaches her use of color with similar openness. Her free use of color to emphasize features – most distinctively the eyes, the gateway to the soul, and lips – and to convey personality both conjures the use of unexpected and unrealistic hues in the Fauve portraits of Matisse, for example, and reflects her former profession as a make up artist. Just as she had found the ability to give her human subjects a new complete persona, leaving behind their actual character to take on a new one, in her paintings she uses color to change the personality of the inner beings she creates. However, whereas a make up artist the goal was perfection, here in her painting, she achieves subtlety and emotion through looseness, creativity and play.

The watercolors come from an even more intuitive place and emerge before her on the page. She has described them as “amorphous shapes that seem not to have an identity, but rather an emotion.” As in her paintings, she captures the essence of her subject rather than a physical likeness.

February James hopes to create a space for conversation through her work, to evoke subjects and emotions we don't usually talk about and to plant a seed for transformation both personal and societal. As a Black woman and mother of an eight year old boy, February James is highly conscious of the world she must explain to her son and the need to contribute her part in transforming our world for the better.

“When the chickens come home to roost” is an old saying most remembered for its use by Malcolm X, referring to the assassination of JFK and injustice in America. In a larger sense, it is used to mean that what goes around comes around, you reap what you sow, or the bad deeds come back to haunt one. The title for this show, manifest in a large installation in one upstairs room of the gallery of a large chicken coop surrounded by chickens, both found and made by the artist out of clay and other materials, is about this karma and the results of the continuity of multi-generational storytelling. In her work, February James “hopes to create some abstract thought that will plant a seed of radical change in someone else, change that we are in dire need of.”

February James was born and raised in Washington D.C. and currently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. A practicing artist for many years, she is presently completing her BFA at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA. Her work has been featured in multiple group shows, including *Punch*, curated by Nina Chanel Abney at Jeffrey Deitch in Los Angeles and *Something About Us* at Anthony Gallery in Chicago. She has had solo exhibitions at Wilding Cran in Los Angeles, Monique Meloche in Chicago and Luce Gallery in Turin, Italy. The New York Times invited her to contribute watercolors to a feature article in the NY Times Style Magazine in February 2021. February James is represented by Tilton Gallery in New York City and Wilding Cran in Los Angeles.