
Reclaiming memory focus of group exhibit

The reclamation of history is often a radical act for folks who've been denied their lineage. The erasure of cultural memory comes from a number of widespread violences — including the prison-industrial complex, institutionalized inaccessibility, anti-trans policies — but lived and felt experiences are often overlooked as they're absorbed into larger narratives. This is why “Of Memories and Forgetfulness” at Chicago Artists Coalition is such an important show.

“Forgetfulness” brings together the work of Caroline Liu, Pooja Pittie and Brittany Leeanne Williams, painters who each use the medium as an advocate for their own memories.

Liu, who lost her short-term memory after a series of concussions, creates highly textured, high-femme self-portraits that speak to her redeveloping sense of identity. The images are fragmented and flow into each other,



CHICAGO ARTISTS COALITION

Caroline Liu's work is featured in “Of Memories and Forgetfulness.”

lacking symmetry and bursting at the edges with floral motifs. In the pink, red and yellow hues of Liu's work, there's a vibrant sense of light coexisting with the darkness of memory.

Pittie's practice explores the relationship between painting,

language and movement, connections she began to implement into her work after being diagnosed with muscular dystrophy in 2015. Full of patchy patterns, hurried strokes and waves of contrasting colors, her canvasses imply joyful shades of mobility.

The curation of Williams' paintings conceptually tackle the connections between white supremacy, state-sanctioned violence and their grave, intentional effects on black histories. Using a palette of colors suited for a meditation room, Williams taps into the insidious, often invisible threads of anti-blackness that weave together the United States.

The paintings of trees in full springtime bloom look serene, a startling contrast to the small pairs of black feet that dangle in their branches, a nod to a history that is still taking place.

Through July 13, Chicago Artists Coalition, 217 N. Carpenter St., Chicago; www.chicagoartistscoalition.org.

— K.H.