

INMAN GALLERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2021

Inman Gallery is pleased to present

Charis Ammon

Stay

and

Alexis Pye

***The Real and the Fantastic /
The Irrational Joys of the Axis***

July 10 – August 21, 2021

Open house, Saturday, July 10

Artists will be present 12-2 pm

Inman Gallery is pleased to present two solo exhibitions, **Charis Ammon: *Stay*** and **Alexis Pye: *The Real and the Fantastic / The Irrational Joys of the Axis***, which are on view July 10 – August 21, 2021. The exhibitions will open on Saturday, July 10, with an all-day open house; both artists, who are based in Houston, will be present from 12 – 2 pm. This will be Ammon’s second solo exhibition and Pye’s first at Inman Gallery.

Although these are two separate exhibitions, common threads can be found between the artists’ works, notably in the dual presence and absence of the human figure, as well as in the viewer’s relationship to their works. Pye’s paintings feature portraits of Black men situated within a garden or foliage setting; her work, as she states, is meant to evoke “playfulness, wonder and blackness, as well as the joys amidst adversity.” Meanwhile, Ammon’s paintings explore how surfaces tell human stories. She captures the passage of time and our presence in it, even though the spaces are void of figures. Humanity is instead present as a vestige in Ammon’s paintings of public, man-made spaces.



Charis Ammon, *Plastic & Daisies*, 2021
oil on canvas, 8 x 10 x 1 in



Alexis Pye, *Flower Boy*, 2021
oil, oil pastel, oil stick on canvas, 30 x 30 x 1 1/2 in

Charis Ammon (born 1992, Dallas, TX) graduated from Texas State University with a BFA in Painting, and she completed her MFA in Painting at The University of Houston in May 2018. In 2017, she participated in the DUST Residency Program in Marfa, TX. Ammon was featured in a solo exhibition, *Still Hot in the Shade*, at Inman Gallery, Houston, TX, in 2018, and exhibited at the Project Gallery at the University of Houston in a solo show, *Rhythm: Works on Paper*, in 2018. Ammon's solo exhibitions also include *Maintenance* at Art League Houston in 2019, and *Inheritance* at The Old Jail Art Center in Albany, TX, in 2020. She was recently included in *Moving Still*, a group show at San Jacinto College North (2020). Ammon was a Hunting Art Prize Finalist in 2016, and her work is included in the permanent collection of The University of Houston. Her work is included in a three-person exhibition titled *Stratum 2021* at the new non-profit venue The Alta Arts, on view through August 29.

Charis Ammon lives and works in Houston, TX.

Alexis Pye (born 1995, Detroit, MI) received her BFA in Painting from the University of Houston in 2018. She was selected as a Summer Studios Resident and for Round 51: Local Impact II at Project Row Houses, both in 2018. Her work was exhibited in a group show of young artists at the David Shelton Gallery for *Everything's Gonna be Alright* in 2019, curated by Robert Hodge. Pye received the Juror's Choice Prize for the 20th Annual Citywide African American Artists Exhibition held at Texas Southern University in 2019, selected by Kanitra Fletcher. She was recently included in the group show *Animal Crossing* at Inman Gallery in 2020. Her work is included in the current group exhibition titled *My Mirror Is Fine* at the Community Artists Collective, Houston.

Alexis Pye lives and works in Houston, TX.

Alexis Pye: *The Real and the Fantastic / The Irrational Joys of the Axis*

Alexis Pye's paintings offer intimate glimpses into the garden-immersed environments of her portrait subjects; however, in works like *Longing* and *Flower Boy*, the subjects are more visible, whereas in *Feuilles tombantes I* and *Feuilles tombantes II*, these figures are more enveloped by the dense foliage surrounding them.

Pye's portraits aim to capture the sensitive and softer side of male masculinity. She uses the traditional medium of portrait painting "to unveil complex truths about the relationship between art history and race." Exploring portraiture as a way to express the Black body outside of its social constructs, Pye uses family members, friends and strangers as the subject matter of her paintings in order to capture these subjects in moments of joy and confidence in their own spaces. She begins with a sketch from a source photo, using images drawn from many different places, including Instagram, family photos, books and paintings. After working out the composition, Pye executes an underpainting by way of a black crayon to lay the groundwork and then builds out the painting's surface with oil paint. She sees her choice of the oil medium as a visceral action, one that creates, as she states, "an interpretation of how I see myself in the world along with others in my community."



Alexis Pye, *Feuilles tombantes I*, 2021
oil, oil pastel, oil stick on canvas, 30 x 30 x 1 1/2 in

These verdant, garden-themed portrait paintings are also imbued with art historical references. Her angular, solid brushwork, coupled with bold outlines, recalls the work of German Expressionist painters, such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Franz Marc, while her interiors resonate with vibrant colors reminiscent of Matisse and other Fauve painters of the early 20th century.

Pye's work can also be viewed within the history of abstracted figures in Black painting. As she notes, "Clementine Hunter, Jacob Lawrence, Kara Walker ... these artists have joined the tradition that uses the silhouette to display a figure we see within all of us. I see myself with the many artists that line Black bookstores, bible bags and grandparents' walls. I was trying to take something that I often saw in my youth and mix it to something that I saw in my generation."

SPECIAL EVENT

Alexis Pye in Conversation with Jamal Cyrus

Saturday, July 17, 1 pm

Charis Ammon: Stay

Charis Ammon's practice is focused around quotidian encounters with the urban landscape—scenes of maintenance, destruction and rebuilding. These compositions ask us to consider sites of change we often overlook or disregard. Ammon's richly painted surfaces invite viewers into a new experience with the urban environment.



Charis Ammon, *Weight*, 2021
oil on canvas, 72 x 96 x 1 1/2 in

Ammon works in two sizes of canvas in order to shift the viewer's perception of accessibility. As she has stated, "the tenderness of my small paintings gives the feeling of being a part of intimate conversation, whereas the larger paintings give a sense of being enveloped yet excluded." The blue tarp in *Weight* prevents the viewer from seeing what might be present behind or beneath this construction site, while in the small painting *Plastic and Daisies*, there is a tangle of orange construction netting and tiny flowers by the sidewalk; everything that is present is visible. Ammon's paintings resonate with a palpable sense of intrigue, especially when we consider the noticeable absence of people in these public spaces. The viewer, in fact, becomes a proxy for absent figures in these large-scale works.

Ammon is also part of a long history of artists fascinated by the intersection of art and everyday life. As Robert Rauschenberg famously declared "Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made - I try to act in the gap." Ammon's impetus is to move through the urban environment and photograph everyday scenes from urban life, which she then translates into paintings that depict sites of production or work, such as construction scenes or sidewalks. She operates in a pictorial space that asks us to reconsider what we may otherwise disregard or ignore. Her works offer a deeper, more emotional engagement with seemingly neutral or pedestrian urban scenes, sites quietly rich in meaning for those who pause to look.

SPECIAL EVENT

Charis Ammon in Conversation with Sarah Beth Wilson
Saturday, August 7, 1 pm