

# CHAPTER NY

**For immediate release**

*...in the Side Room*

**Caleb Jamel Brown & Kira Scerbin**

organized by Erin Jane Nelson

February 11 – March 19, 2022

This show is a meditation on the strange discipline it takes to make icky objects. Ickiness is a space that exists before abjection, before repulsion, before horror but a space that can only come after attraction. On British reality dating shows, for example, there's the inevitability of a recently infatuated couple "getting the ick" after a brief stint of dating. While the material connotations of "icky" as in "unpleasantly sticky" are instructive for looking at the work in this show, it's also the spiritual texture of ickiness—the way a kid saying "I feel icky" sounds drippy. And I use the word "discipline" because it is unexpectedly hard to resist the urge to push something that is kind of beautiful just a little too far into the realm of the ick. Likewise, it's difficult to take a work that is veering into the horrifying and abject and stopping to let it live in the purgatory of "just icky." The gestures towards stickiness—as in objects sticking together in a mad combination of plastic paint and thread in Caleb Jamel Brown's work, or as in bodies and images smearing and sticking together in Kira Scerbin's paintings—define these artists' ways of working.

Brown's recent collages come out of an interest in quilting, while denying the comforting softness and nostalgia of entangled fabric. Instead, his quilts bind satin to plastic, thread to photograph, exuberant splurges and stains into elaborate tapestries. There are obscured photographs the artist has taken of friends, inscrutable bits of text, shreds of old clothes, rubbings, holes; they are porous, over-touched, and by extension, erotic. Scerbin's paintings share this erotic impulse, but accessed through imagery rather than material. Her figures are often weirded and dark, but without malevolence, their bodies resting somewhere between human and specter. These are humanoid creatures in orgasmic splendor, both demonstrating and celebrating the queasiness of having a body—impulses, fears, love, and all.

Together, I hope their work can make an argument for the icky, proving that unpleasant stickiness is the gooey necessary stuff of life and longing.

— Erin Jane Nelson

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**Caleb Jamel Brown** (b. 1993, Atlanta, Georgia) lives and works in Atlanta, Georgia. He received his BFA from Valdosta State University in Valdosta, GA in 2016. Brown has had solo and two-person exhibitions at Camayuhs, Atlanta; MINT, Atlanta; Plough Gallery, Tifton, GA; and the Mast, Atlanta; among others. His work has been included in group exhibitions at Below Grand, New York; Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Greenville, SC; Westobou Gallery, Augusta, GA; Praise Shadows Art Gallery, Brookline, MA; and MINT, Atlanta; among others.

**Kira Scerbin** (b. 1991, Cleveland, Ohio) lives and works in Chicago, Illinois. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2014. Scerbin has had solo and two-person exhibitions at Final Hot Desert, White Pocket, AZ; Et al., San Francisco; Springsteen, Baltimore; Twin, Chicago; Catbox Contemporary, Queens; Prairie, Chicago; and at King's Leap, Brooklyn; among others. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Interstate Projects, Brooklyn; In Lieu, Los Angeles; New Works & Horses Two, Chicago; Phil Gallery, Los Angeles; and Species, Atlanta; among others.