

Henry Chapman
Reading About War

April 25 – May 24, 2025

"We were married on the day of a tragedy and the weeks and months that followed only brought news of escalating, despicable suffering. Our own happiness was blinding. We held the ceremony at home, in front of windows overlooking the rainy street, the rain ending just before we made eternal vows, promising always to live in what Laura called the sunny place. My sister spoke and sang. I kept looking up. Above us a projection Kyle made fluttered grainy black and white birds within the trees of another spring.

Scrolling the news, a story: an old man who had cared for a tree for decades, from sapling to adulthood, pleading with soldiers, Kill me, instead. Not it."

— — Henry Chapman

RAINRAIN is pleased to present *Reading About War*, a solo exhibition by New York-based artist and writer Henry Chapman. Comprising a new body of paintings, the exhibition reflects on the dissonance between private life and public catastrophe, created as Chapman settled into a new home with his wife while witnessing the ongoing destruction in Gaza. Set against broader global conditions of violence, complicity, and moral reckoning, these works hold together the contradictions of intimacy and upheaval, daily routine and political rupture—echoing, in spirit, T.J. Clark's post-9/11 reading of Poussin's *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* as a metaphor for the modern experience of catastrophe. As a person, a Jewish person, Chapman turns to image-making not to deliver answers but to remain with the tension of identity, responsibility, and silence.

Layers of contradiction emerge in Chapman's juxtaposition of violent imagery and bright color. Several works depict weapons—axes, bulldozers, guns—through a combination of painterly gestures and monoprint techniques that produce both sharp and hazy impressions. Deliberate marks and swaths of poured paint contrast with unsettling subjects, prompting a reconsideration of the emotional associations tied to color. Images of trees appear repeatedly throughout the works: the magnolia tree outside Chapman's home in Brooklyn is echoed in depictions of olive trees in Palestine—symbols of livelihood that have been destroyed in conflict. Together, these two trees—differentiated by color—form a visual and emotional opposition: one domestic and intact, the other distant and violently uprooted. Their conceptual pairing underscores a deeper contradiction that runs through the exhibition: between stability and destruction, care and erasure.

Chapman's use of negative space introduces a rhythm of intervals that disrupt yet unify gesture, image, and text. Most of the texts that appear on his canvases originate from his own reflections. In *Men in the Sun*, however, he draws from the Palestinian author and political activist Ghassan Kanafani's 1962 novella of the same name, incorporating fragments of its text into painted vignettes of heat, memory, and displacement. Figurative imagery, abstract marks, color blocks, empty space, and language are loosely arranged into compositions that feel both fragmented and connected. This open structure becomes a way of holding contradiction—beauty and brutality, intimacy and distance—within the same visual field.

At a time when images are rapidly consumed and painting often retreats into fantasy, repetition, or market-driven taste, Chapman insists on it as a space of complexity, slowness, and moral tension. His refusal to separate personal life from political awareness, or aesthetics from ethical position, challenges easy narratives about the role of the artist today. These are not paintings that soothe or resolve—they ask instead what it means to witness, to remain present, and to keep making in the face of it all.

For press inquiries or to request images, please contact hello@rainraingallery.com.

Henry Chapman (b. 1987, NYC) is an American artist and writer who lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He studied painting at The Cooper Union, where he was awarded Young Alumnus of the Year in 2013, and at Yale University, where he completed his MFA in Painting and Printmaking in 2015. Notable exhibitions include Kate Werble (New York, USA), T293 (Naples, Italy), T293 (Rome, Italy), Labs Contemporary Art (Bologna, Italy), Rhona Hoffman (Chicago, USA), among others. In addition, Chapman is the recipient of the Philip Guston and Musa McKim Named Residency at Yaddo, the Elizabeth Greenfield Hicks Prize, and the 2023–2024 Emerging Writer Fellowship at The Center for Fiction. He is currently working on his debut novel about the art world. He co-runs Guest Gallery in Brooklyn with his wife, Laura.