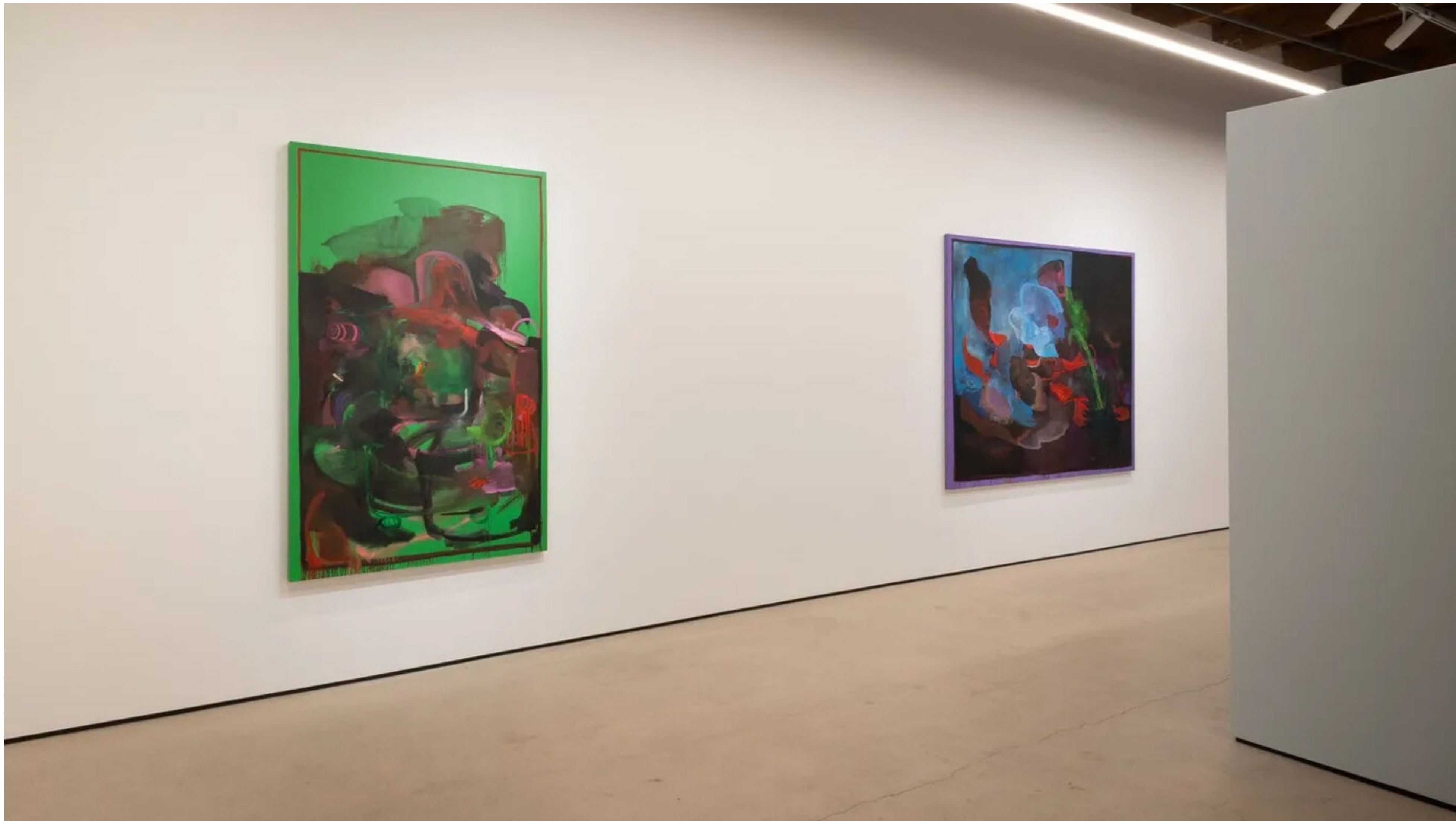


I dream I cross the river in one stride

13 Feb – 28 Mar 2026 at the Mariane Ibrahim Gallery in Chicago, United States

13 MARCH 2026



Various artists, I dream I cross the river in one stride, exhibition view. Courtesy of Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

Mariane Ibrahim is pleased to present *I dream I cross the river in one stride*, a group exhibition bringing together the work of Clémence Gbonon (b. 1994), Britney Leeanne Williams (b. 1990), and Autumn Wallace (b. 1996).

The exhibition is inspired by ideas explored in Lorraine O’Grady’s seminal essay *Olympia’s maid: reclaiming black female subjectivity*. If, as O’Grady argues, the Black female body has long functioned as the unseen reverse side of Western femininity—present as stereotype, absent as subject—these artists reclaim the right to produce images that are self-authored, multiple, and unafraid of excess. Across painting and sculpture, Gbonon, Williams, and Wallace refuse inherited dichotomies and instead inhabit what O’Grady calls a “both/and” space: sensuous and thoughtful, wild and monumental, intimate and vulnerable, queer and undefined.

Clémence Gbonon’s work lends the exhibition its title, which is drawn from a line in Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. The phrase situates both the exhibition and Gbonon’s practice within a horizon of urgency, movement, and psychic crossing. Trained in international law and political science before her artistic studies, Gbonon approaches painting as a site where the body, politics, and abstraction remain inseparable, echoing, in a different register, O’Grady’s conceptual insistence on embodiment. In her canvases, the figure slips through our fingers: it escapes clear outline, resists capture. Yet however abstracted, the energy remains recognizably human. In works like *A chair down from heaven* (2025) her colors, often complementary contrasts, are fierce and unexpected, carrying an affective charge that oscillates between vulnerability and defiance.

Britney Leeanne Williams works through a reduced palette of red, black, and white, anchored by an obsessive, almost devotional relationship to red. Williams builds her figures by redacting bodies from European classical paintings, particularly Annunciation scenes illustrating moments of divine dialogue or angelic intervention.

The series emerged from a period of creative block, when the artist imagined how liberating it would be for an angel to whisper instructions in her ear. Recognizing the parallel between this fantasy and the myth of divine inspiration embedded in Western art history, Williams reframes and transforms theological encounters into a contemporary scene of artistic revelation. The resulting paintings—*Interruption 7* (2024) (inspired by the genre scene of Jacob Wrestling the Angel) and *Interruption 10: transition* (2025), presented in the exhibition—depict moments of interference, insight, and becoming. Formally, her reds recall vitality; materially, her surfaces borrow the decadence and excess of Baroque painting, retooled into a contemporary language of lushness.

Autumn Wallace draws inspiration from handmade folk rag dolls, while also critically engaging the racist legacy of the pickaninny caricature. From this charged material history, she makes a cosmic leap into sculptural figures assembled from reclaimed Americana: repurposed quilts, leather scraps, and found materials selected in keeping with the artist’s ethical commitment to reuse. Wallace does not reproduce Americana, she reclaims it, reconfiguring its textures into a speculative narrative universe inhabited by her own characters.

In her paintings, we encounter snapshots of these figures’ lives: ritualistic, sensual, unapologetic scenes in which bodily energy remains palpable across two- and three-dimensional form. Her characters possess agency, sexuality, and a layered double consciousness. In the gallery, Wallace presents the sculpture *Fruit loop* (2023) and the painting *Heartstrung* (2023). The light blue field surrounding her sculpture—known as “haint blue” in African American folklore, traditionally used to ward off unwanted spirits—becomes an atmospheric extension of the work itself. The color frames the sculpture as a charged, protective zone.

Presented together, these artists do more than correct an art-historical omission; they propose a contemporary grammar for seeing and feeling lived experience. In dialogue with O’Grady’s text, the exhibition suggests that reclaiming female subjectivity today means moving beyond rescue from the male gaze toward a more radical act: freeing these figures from the historic script altogether. Here, the artworks become sites of self-knowledge, contradiction, pleasure—spaces where the right to complexity is not negotiated but asserted.

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Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

The gallery has hosted acclaimed exhibitions, with a founding focus on the African diaspora, from leading and emerging artists including Amoako Bofofo, Yukimasa Ida, Peter Uka and Zohra Opoku. The gallery has worked with global renowned institutions and have had an international presence at art fairs with acclaimed and prize-winning presentations.

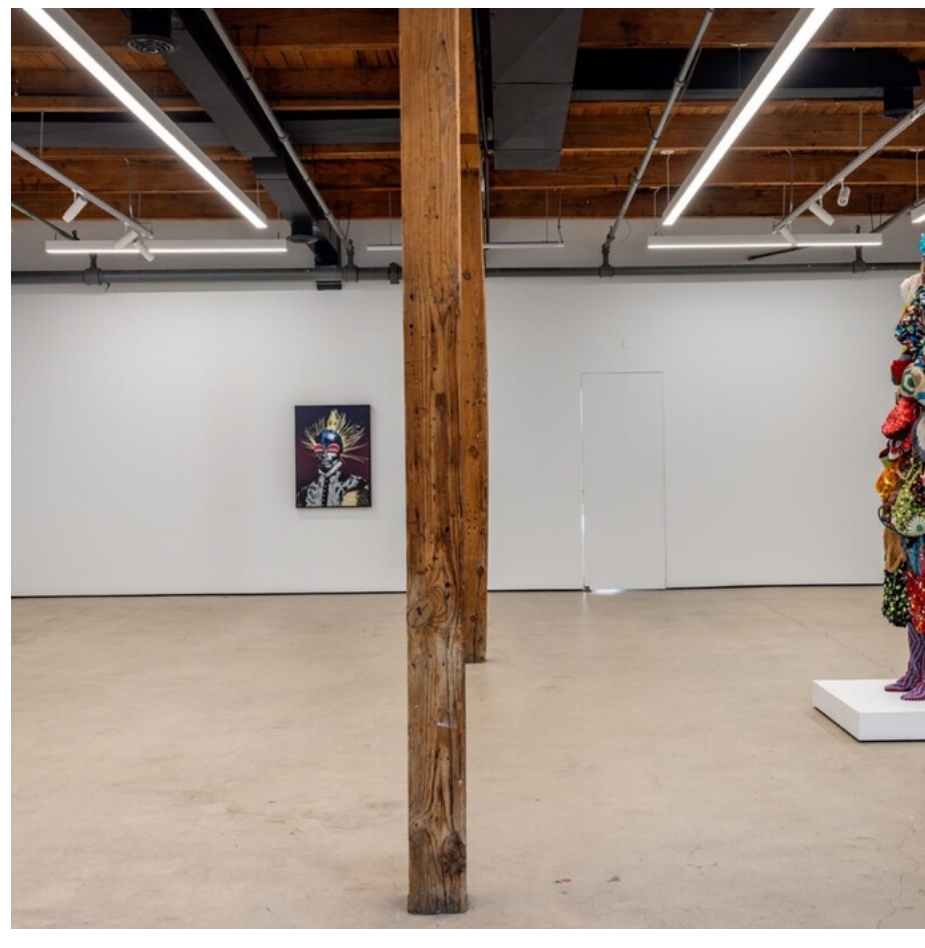
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Location
Chicago, United States

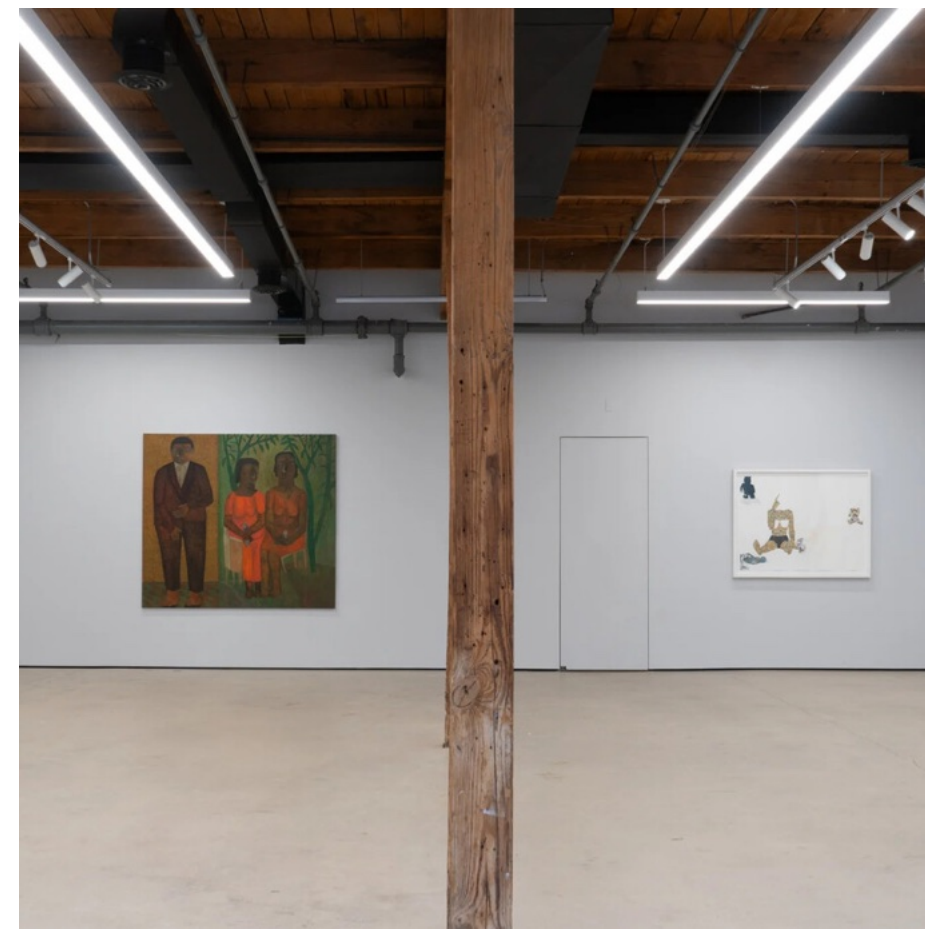


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