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CHICAGO ARTISTS FIND INSPIRATION IN PUBLIC DATA

BLANC Gallery is pleased to present ***“Involuntary. Loss(y). Privacy,”*** a two-person exhibition featuring Chicago artists, Stephen Flemister and Julian Williams, on display May 11 – July 21, 2012. An opening reception will be held Friday, May 11 from 6pm to 9pm at Blanc Gallery, 4445 S. King Drive, Chicago, IL 60653. 773.952.4394

“Involuntary. Loss(y). Privacy” is a timely compilation of drawings, paintings and mixed media that looks at the ways in which we are unintentionally identified/identifiable by data that is collected, captured and stored on the internet. Recent events in the national news media remind us of just how powerful a single fleeting image and profile can be in determining whether one is labeled menace or martyr. Stephen Flemister and Julian Williams are deeply invested in using portrait painting as a vehicle for exploring this duality. Both artists start with digital imagery of unknown Black subjects pulled from Department of Corrections mug shots as their source material but arrive at very different conceptual places in the work produced.

The exhibition’s title centers on American society’s increasing willingness to give up the right to control personal information via the Internet and social media. In information technology, *lossy compression* is a term that refers to a data encoding procedure that minimizes the amount of data that is needed to make an image file legible. Each time a file is compressed, data is discarded and resolution is lost. For this exhibition however, *lossy* has taken on many different meanings for Flemister and Williams: Loss of self; a loss of innocence; the reduction of a person down to a vague likeness; an identity that is unrecognizable, minimized, and mistaken.

Stephen’s work combines printmaking, encaustic, collage and mixed media into his acrylic and oil painting process to build layered surfaces that are as complex as his subjects. He is interested in issues of surveillance, anonymity and the ubiquity of imagery available for public consumption. Stephen combs through public databases looking for images that seem familiar either through personal memory or imagined reality.

Julian has created 15 portraits, *the Englewood Boys Series*, which vividly re-imagines the missing details of grainy black and white Illinois Department of Corrections mug shots of young Black males. His choice of watercolor for the paintings highlights the stark contrast between the delicacy of the medium and the harshness of the subject matter. Julian’s approach calls into question the seeming objective quality of the photograph. The series has taken on a particularly personal tone as the impact of black male incarceration has directly effected members of his family. He used painting as a way to process his thoughts on the subject.

“Involuntary. Loss(y). Privacy,” is on display May 11 – July 21, 2012. Join the artists for a reception on Friday, May 11 from 6pm to 9pm at Blanc Gallery, 4445 S. King Drive, Chicago, IL 60653. 312.907.9323. Light refreshments will be served. Additional programming will be held throughout the duration of the exhibit. For more information, visit: www.blancchicago.com or call 773.952.4394. This event is free and open to the public. Street parking available free of charge.

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About Stephen Flemister

A native Chicagoan, Stephen received his BFA in Interactive Arts and Media from Columbia College. His art making is a study in the parallels between present day technology and traditional studio art practices. Stephen has exhibited at Dittmar Gallery, the Silver Room, and the Hyde Park Art Center, to name a few. He was a resident in the Hyde Park Alliance for Arts & Culture's (HyPa) "*Here and Now*" Pop-Up storefront project and the "*Simply Perfect*" Pop-Up Art Studio, sponsored by the Chicago Artist Coalition and Patrón. Stephen's work is included in numerous public and private collections. For more information, visit www.stephenflemister.com

About Julian Williams

Julian Williams has been painting for over 30 years. Known for his rigor and tireless productivity as a painter, Julian's image making has spanned the gamut from representation to abstraction. He received both his BFA and MFA in drawing and painting from the School of the Art Institute and has exhibited throughout the Chicagoland area. Julian's art can be found in many public and private collections, including those of Patric McCoy and the Gardner family. Julian's expert teaching knowledge is highly sought after by several academic institutions including Columbia College, the HPAC and South Suburban Community College. For more information, visit www.julianwilliamsnow.com

About BLANC Gallery

Blanc Gallery is committed to rekindling the Culture of Conversation that was a vital part of the history of the neighborhood to which it belongs. Artists, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs engaged in a robust dialogue on matters of importance to the community. Recent years have seen a powerful resurgence of this creative energy, with art galleries, restaurants, schools, theaters and event facilities providing vital new public forums. Blanc's bold mission is to engage African Americans and all Chicagoans through the arts and to ignite dialogue on issues of spiritual, political and social significance. As a community-based art gallery, Blanc collaborates with local non-profits and institutions to support their missions and integrate them into a dialogue with the work. blancchicago.com

BLANC Gallery hours are by appointment only. Visitors are encouraged to call or email to schedule a time to visit. The gallery is located at 4445 S. King Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60653. Visit the website blancchicago.com or call 773.952.4394 for more information.