



February James: Gap Year

April 27 – June 30, 2023
Opening reception: April 27th, 6 – 8 PM

Tilton Gallery is delighted to present February James' second solo exhibition with the gallery. *Gap Year* will include paintings, watercolors, and installations. The exhibition will run from April 27th through June 30th. A reception for the artist will take place Thursday, April 27th from 6:00 to 8:00PM.

A gap year is, by definition, a break from study or work. *Gap Year*, the exhibition, provides a place of rest and retreat, a place to review and reflect and to commune with our inner self, our memories and the ancestors that have come before us.

February James centers this exhibition around the idea of the home, the place that contains the family, that resonates in one's memory as the place from which we come and is the source of our outlook on the world, our religion, our diet, our ways of communicating. It is the first place that taught us about our emotions and about love. As such, the home can be regarded as an altar of sorts, an image that remains in our hearts and minds.

James' two largest multi-panel paintings, *Love is the solution?* and *Make Our Dreams Synchronize*, are in the shape of a home or house, painted with James' signature figures. Large and with multiple figures, they are reminiscent of Renaissance altarpieces. A central rectangle, covered in velvet, also painted with another figure, acts as a type of doorway, suggesting the possibility of a passage into imagination, into the memory of the home or another world. The triangular "roof" is filled with a multitude of faces that represent the spirits and ancestors that fill the home, the familiar voices that fill one's head. Home is where individual, though related, people come together, to live and eat and sleep, to communicate and relate. Home becomes the people who inhabit it, just as the body becomes a dwelling for spirit and energy.

James' paintings and watercolors of imaginary people, mostly women, fill the rest of the space, forming a personal narrative. Her psychological portraits are abstracted, created in a painting style that prioritizes a loose handling of the materials and a unique color palette that depicts an interior emotional state rather than a recognizable individual.

One gallery space is transformed by a room-size installation, *The Upper Room*, where viewers can enter and become a participant. The walls and low ceiling are covered in purple velvet; the floor is soft and sinks with each footstep; the light is dim. A sense of disorientation is enhanced by the sound of people talking, objects being moved, the type of noises experienced in a home. Small paintings, lit from above, are hung high, like Byzantine icons; their size and positioning create a sense of both reverence and intimacy. At the center of this liminal space are two chairs, also covered in velvet. Found and repurposed or passed down through generations, they are emblematic of James' repeated use of furniture that has its own history as a symbol for the preservation of past memories. The viewer can sit and be transported into the realm of contemplation, memory and imagination. *The Upper Room* becomes a place where we can commune with the spirits of passed loved ones.

February James was born and raised in Washington D.C. and currently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. She received her BFA from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA. She has exhibited in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, London, Berlin and Turin, Italy. James' work is currently included in *What's Going On*, the inaugural exhibition at the Rubell Museum in Washington, D.C. In 2021, James was invited by Mickalene Thomas and Racquel Chevremont to create a room size installation in *Set It Off*, an exhibition they organized for the Parrish Art Museum in Watermill, NY. She has been featured in multiple other group shows, including *Punch*, curated by Nina Chanel Abney at Jeffrey Deitch in Los Angeles, *Face-to-Face* at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling, New York and *BodyLand*, curated by Lauren Taschen at Galerie Max Hetzler in Berlin. She was invited to contribute watercolors to a feature in *The New York Times Style Magazine* in February 2021. James has been represented by Tilton Gallery since 2020.