

## CASEY KAPLAN

121 WEST 27TH STREET

NEW YORK NY 10001

TEL +1 212 645 7335

WWW.CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

INFO@CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

Sydney Cain

Frieze Los Angeles

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For Frieze Los Angeles 2025, Casey Kaplan is pleased to present a solo booth of new works by Sydney Cain (b. 1991, San Francisco, CA), marking the artist's first presentation with the gallery in anticipation of their inaugural solo exhibition in New York in September 2025.

Cain's paintings recount the storied and arcane histories of the African Diaspora. Using carbon-based and mineral materials like powdered metals, graphite, pigments, and chalk on wood, Cain charts the evolution of these histories, reconstructing narratives within a reverential refuge. By mining space for ancestral reclamation and tracing the collective consciousness of communities, Cain defines experiences beyond a visible plane as what they call metaphysical landscapes. Their predominantly black-pigmented compositions emerge in dimly lit spaces, shaped through a process of gradual unveiling—sculpting, rubbing, and erasing—to reveal the light buried beneath. Cain's practice is rooted in personal and collective genealogies; it contemplates the lasting effects of subjugation on Black lineage, while commemorating origin stories and probing existential inquiry.

In a new body of work, Cain navigates a familiar terrain where bodies commune to guide, journey, celebrate, mourn, and occupy a type of corporeal limbo. Amid a mostly monochromatic palette, Cain's figures gather across unseen thresholds, radiating within a golden, atmospheric glow and pulsate like intergenerational messengers or conduits of energy. In *Undercurrents (We Found You and Are Still Searching)* (2024), the gaze of two central figures is frontal, commanding attention with a steady and striking presence. Surrounding them is a community of figures in various dress, fashioned with masks, cowry shells, sailor hats, and intricate ornaments, detailing a reverent and timeless space. As another enigmatic figure grips an oar, they steer through the currents of a flowing waterway akin to *Currents Never Die* (2025), where two cloaked entities in beaded skins march through shallow water to guide those who follow. Beaded skins encase multiple figures in Cain's landscapes—some are completely obscured, while others are only blindfolded, as in Cain's small format work, *Sights* (2025). The static of their skin's pattern suggests they are channels for the living or the dead, aiding in the eternal path to self and collective discovery.

Whether atop dark ground or via the ripples of the water's edge, cloaked bodies in adorned dress rise and retreat through a hardly perceptible plane. By wading in low tide or canoeing through a choppy sea, water plays a central role as a purveyor of transformation and ritual, in birth and death. Faint traces of fish swim between figures as if all are submerged along their journey, while some clutch objects like bamboo sticks and machetes, uniting to reap the benefits of the land. Exterior spaces, once hidden in darkness, are brought to light, illustrating an innate trust in the elements, where the unseen materializes through a process of healing.

A congealed blend of Liquitex and enamel produces dense, metallic surfaces across Cain's compositions. Layers of medium are poured to yield a reflective sheen and pool at the edges in radiant hues, only to be cut away to reveal colored pigment underneath. Holes puncture the surface to suggest a multiple dimension buried within. In *Currents Never Die*, the heads of two upright figures dissolve into bulbous clouds of thick medium, intimating that they are figments of reality, ready to voyage. *Sights'* loose, gestural strokes are rubbed and erased in a cropped scene where a crow frames a faintly rendered figure marked by a single piercing eye. The bird's presence is charged— it arrives as a messenger of the afterlife or is poised for migration, waiting for rebirth.