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**CLULEY
PROJECTS**

Hollie Brown: *Candy Baby*

February 17 – March 23, 2024

Opening Reception: February 17, 6 – 8pm



Cherry Blues, Hollie Brown, 2023, Acrylic and gouache on canvas, 40 x 32 in.

CLULEY PROJECTS is pleased to announce *Candy Baby*, an exhibition of new work by Abilene-based artist, Hollie Brown. Across new paintings and mixed-media works, *Candy Baby* takes an incisive look at the history of Madonna and Child portraits—Brown interprets the psychology and culturally loaded definitions of motherhood through these theological subjects. For her new series of work, Brown pulls from The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s extensive collection of early modern European painting and their more than 300 variations on the Madonna and Child. In a jarring and saturated color palette, she infuses humor and social critique into Northern and Italian Renaissance depictions of divine motherhood—ultimately, she opens a pathway to empathize with the social pressure placed upon women to inhabit the role of perfect mother, caregiver, and vessel.

Though her subjects hail from the early modern European art tradition, Brown's style is decidedly contemporary—the work of Dana Schutz (who reinterpreted the Madonna and Child in her 2016 charcoal drawing "Waterfall"), Alice Neel, and Judy Chicago are apt analogues to Brown's practice. Works in *Candy Baby* like the acrylic and gouache painting "Cherry Blues," remove the Madonna and Child from their Renaissance-era perfection—both formally and conceptually—adding a layer of melancholy and distance between the two figures. Deep blues offset by highlights of bright pink cannibalize the painting's reference, a 15th century work by Italian painter Vittore Crivelli. Her painterly style—seen in thick, unconcealed brushstrokes—pays homage to her own labor in creating these works. Unencumbered by the need for naturalistic representation, Brown's work exudes the powerful and nuanced emotions of women, mothers or not, and their depiction in art and culture.

Drawing from the artist's lived experience, *Candy Baby* looks at the pressure she and other women have faced to become mothers through highlighting phallic symbols and misogynistic narratives present in historical art. Well-known religious metaphors like the apple, representing Eve's original sin from the book of *Genesis*, and lesser-known ones like cucumbers symbolizing "redemption" are placed under Brown's artistic microscope. Blown-up and rendered in fauvist-esque palettes the artist exposes these masculinist narratives hiding in plain sight. The work in *Candy Baby* establishes a foundation through which the artist and other women burdened by socially prescribed duties can explore possibilities of freeing courage.

Candy Baby will be Hollie Brown's first solo presentation with Cluley Projects.

Hollie Brown (b. 1988) is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Abilene, TX. Brown received her BFA in Painting from Texas State University (2012) and her MFA from The University of California, Riverside (2017). From 2018-2020 she lectured on Art and Design at Texas State University and Austin Community College. She currently runs the business "Little Shop of Hollies" which she founded in 2020.

Her work has been featured in solo and group exhibitions nationally including, San Jacinto College, CA; Human Resources Gallery, Los Angeles, CA; Spellerberg Projects, Lockhart, TX and Icosa Gallery, Austin, TX. Brown's work was featured in the 144th issue of *New American Paintings*.

Erin Cluley Gallery is a contemporary art gallery representing emerging, mid-career, and established artists from Dallas and the United States. The gallery presents a provocative program of artists working in both traditional and alternative forms including painting, sculpture, new media, photography, sculptural installation, and public intervention.

In 2014, Erin Cluley Gallery ignited a creative movement in West Dallas acting as a hub for visual arts and community engagement. After nearly five years on Fabrication Street, the gallery has moved its operation to Riverbend – a development in Dallas' Design District celebrating the intersection between culture and commerce.

In April 2021, Cluley opened Cluley Projects – a satellite location in West Dallas acting as an incubator space focusing on regional artists and providing a platform for discovery and mentorship.

For all press inquiries contact

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