

5 Artists on Our Radar This January

Troy Chew, *Like tic, tic*, 2020

During Altman Seigel’s online viewing room presentation for Art Basel in Miami Beach this past December, a work by the young Los Angeles-based artist Troy Chew was listed as sold shortly after the VIP preview went live. A 2018 MFA grad from California College of the Arts (CCA), Chew creates work that highlights the contributions of Black artists within popular culture, with a particular focus on hip-hop culture. For instance, his early series “Out the Mud” refers to the common trope used in rap and hip-hop circles to refer to those rising talents who find success despite humble beginnings. Chew visualized this idea literally and figuratively in the series by overlaying mud cloth—a traditional textile of Mali in West Africa—atop canvases showing scenes of wealthy and accomplished Black subjects.

Chew built upon his “Slanguage” series this past fall in the exhibition “Yadadamean” at CULT Aimee Friberg Exhibitions in San Francisco. The “Slanguage” series of still-life paintings reference slang terms for themes that are popular in rap music and culture—such as bread, cheese, and bacon to signify money. Painted in the style of 16th- and 17th-century Flemish *vanitas* still lifes, the works imagine a history in which Black culture was recognized within fine art, especially during a period in which it was excluded and unrepresented.

In fall 2020, Chew’s new series “Three Crowns,” made up of three tooth-shaped paintings—representative of the number of teeth Chew lost when attacked by police—was exhibited in “Fuck the King’s Horses and All the King’s Men” at Parker Gallery in Los Angeles. The series explores the evolution of cosmetic dentistry and use of grills in hip-hop and mainstream culture.

Since graduating from CCA, Chew has exhibited widely with galleries throughout California. He was named the 2019 Facebook artist in residence and awarded the 2019–2020 Tournesol Award and artist residency at the Headlands Center for the Arts in 2018.

Juliana Lopez, “5 Artists on Our Radar This January.” *Artsy* (January 4, 2021), accessed online.