



**CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY PRESENTS  
STAN SQUIREWELL: ROBITUSSIN, HOTCOMBS & GREASE**

**On View March 28 - May 24, 2025**



**March 13, 2025** – Claire Oliver Gallery is pleased to present *Robitussin, Hotcombs & Grease*, a solo exhibition by multidisciplinary artist Stan Squirewell. With a nod to the ubiquity of the quotidian items: “Robitussin, Hotcombs & Grease” as hallmarks of domesticity and comfort in Black homes, Squirewell’s latest works focus on the reclamation of identity from historical anonymity, forging an intimacy and proximity with the past that lives alongside us in the present through everyday traditions. Across the more than 15 works in the exhibition, Squirewell sources images from the Smithsonian Institution’s anonymous photo archives, antique photos of friends and family ancestors, transforming them into layered collages, weaving vibrant patterns and contemporary luxury brand logos along with imagery that confers identity and status to these anonymous historical figures. *Stan Squirewell: Robitussin, Hotcombs & Grease* will be on view March 28 - May 24, 2025.

“My new work is a reflection of my upbringing and the profound influence of ancestry,” states Squirewell. “Growing up, I was shaped by elders around me, and everyday objects like Robitussin, hotcombs, and grease became vessels for the rituals that anchored me to my heritage. These items transcend their mundane uses: they embody traditions passed down through generations, grounding me in a collective identity.”

Centered on reminiscence and the solace of cherished family memories, the exhibition’s title references household remedies and self-care traditions that shaped Squirewell’s upbringing—Robitussin, the ubiquitous cure-all, and hot combs and grease, not only essential to Black hair care but also deeply embedded in the textures, rituals, and intimate interiority of Black family life. These works meditate on family, shared experiences within Black American culture, and everyday routines that, over time, have taken on a ceremonious significance. With tenderness and a sense of melancholic longing, Squirewell reflects on the intimate moments that define a household, transforming them into layered visual narratives that intertwine personal history with cultural identity.

Stan Squirewell began his career as both a sculptor and photographer, and this multifaceted approach remains central to his artistic practice. Unlike other collage artists who use found materials, Squirewell personally owns and arranges all the fabric used in his works. He photographs these compositions, then manipulates the images in Photoshop, ultimately printing the final pieces on archival photo paper. This deliberate process serves to honor ancestors who were not respected in their lifetimes, ensuring the permanence of these historical narratives.

Integral to his work is the framing process, where each frame is hand-carved and inscribed with texts, ranging from Langston Hughes’ poems to ancestral glyphs from a long-forgotten African language. This infuses the artwork with deep cultural significance. Squirewell also employs the *shou sugi ban* technique of fire-blackening wood—originating from Japan—to preserve and memorialize his frames, transforming them into reliquaries and deepening the connection between past and present.

Squirewell likens his mixed-media process to a DJ remix, layering textures, fabrics, and adornments onto his subjects to reclaim and reimagine Black identity. His compositions offer a counter-narrative to the historical erasure of personal and communal legacies, presenting figures adorned with collaged fabrics and status-branding elements that imbue them with new significance.

In *Robitussin, Hotcombs & Grease*, Squirewell reflects on family and legacy not only through his mixed-media portraits but also through the intricate framing process. Each frame begins with a transcribed statement composed of binary code, Indigenous American symbols, and African glyphs, meticulously inscribed into wood before being charred. The fusion of text, material, and technique adds a deeply symbolic layer, turning each work into a physical manifestation of the cultural dialogues Squirewell seeks to ignite. Drawing from personal memory, he centers relatives, everyday objects, and motifs associated with Black American life—imbuing them with the weight of history, resilience, and remembrance.

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#### **IMAGE CAPTIONS L-R**

Stan Squirewell, *After Sunday School*, 2025

Stan Squirewell, *Girls on Saturn*, 2025

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### **ABOUT STAN SQUIREWELL**

Stan Squirewell (b. 1978) is a painter, photographer, installation, and performance artist. His work has been exhibited worldwide and is part of the permanent collections of The Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Museum of Fine Art, Boston, The Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, National Museum for African American History and Culture, A Smithsonian Museum, Washington DC amongst others.

Born and raised in Washington, DC in the Barry Farm neighborhood, just a few blocks away from The Nicholson Project, Squirewell established a serious art practice while working from his Harlem-based studio before moving to Louisville, KY where he currently lives and works. Squirewell's artistic training began at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. He holds an MFA from Maryland Institute College of Art's Hoffberger School of Painting (2007). He has performed with Nick Cave (SoundSuits) at the National Portrait Gallery, and Jefferson Pinder with G-Fine Arts.

### **ABOUT CLAIRE OLIVER GALLERY**

Claire Oliver Gallery is located in Central Harlem in a four-story brownstone. For nearly 25 years, Claire Oliver Gallery has showcased and celebrated artwork, with a focus on work by women and people of color, which transcends and challenges the traditional art historical canon. Our forward-thinking program and exclusive commitment to the primary market allows for an intensive focus that has nurtured and grown the careers of our artists. Many of the gallery's artists have been included in The Venice Biennale, The Whitney Biennial, and biennales in Sydney, Pittsburgh, and Lyon and have exhibited works in major international museums including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, Centre Georges Pompidou, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and The Los Angeles County Museum of Art amongst others. Claire Oliver Gallery artists are included in the permanent collections of many important museums worldwide including The Smithsonian American Art Museum, The Art Institute of Chicago, The Tate Britain, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The State Hermitage Museum, MoMA, and the Museum of Arts and Design amongst many others. Claire Oliver Gallery held the first American exhibition for the Russian collaborative AES+F, whose work went on to twice represent Russia in the Russian pavilion of the Venice Biennale. Gallery artists have received prestigious fellowships including Fulbright, Guggenheim, USArtist and National Endowment for the Arts.

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