



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACK BALAS CHECKERED PASSED

January 9 – February 29, 2020

Opening reception:
Thursday, January 9, 2020
6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

ClampArt is pleased to announce “Jack Balas | Checkered Passed”—the artist’s first solo show with the gallery, and his third solo exhibition in New York City.



Jack Balas is an artist whose work primarily includes painting, drawing, and photography, often incorporating extensive textual elements. After earning BFA and MFA degrees in sculpture from Northern Illinois University, Balas moved from the Chicago area to Los Angeles, where he first worked as a cross-country art shipper, driving between Los Angeles and New York on a route that regularly took him through the western landscapes that have come to define much of his work. Eventually moving away from sculpture entirely, Balas began producing paintings of athletic young men annotated and layered with numbers, anecdotes, and other disparate elements that offer a depiction of idealized masculinity in America through the lens of the artist’s personal experiences, as well as a contemporary counterpoint to the art-historical archetype of the female nude.

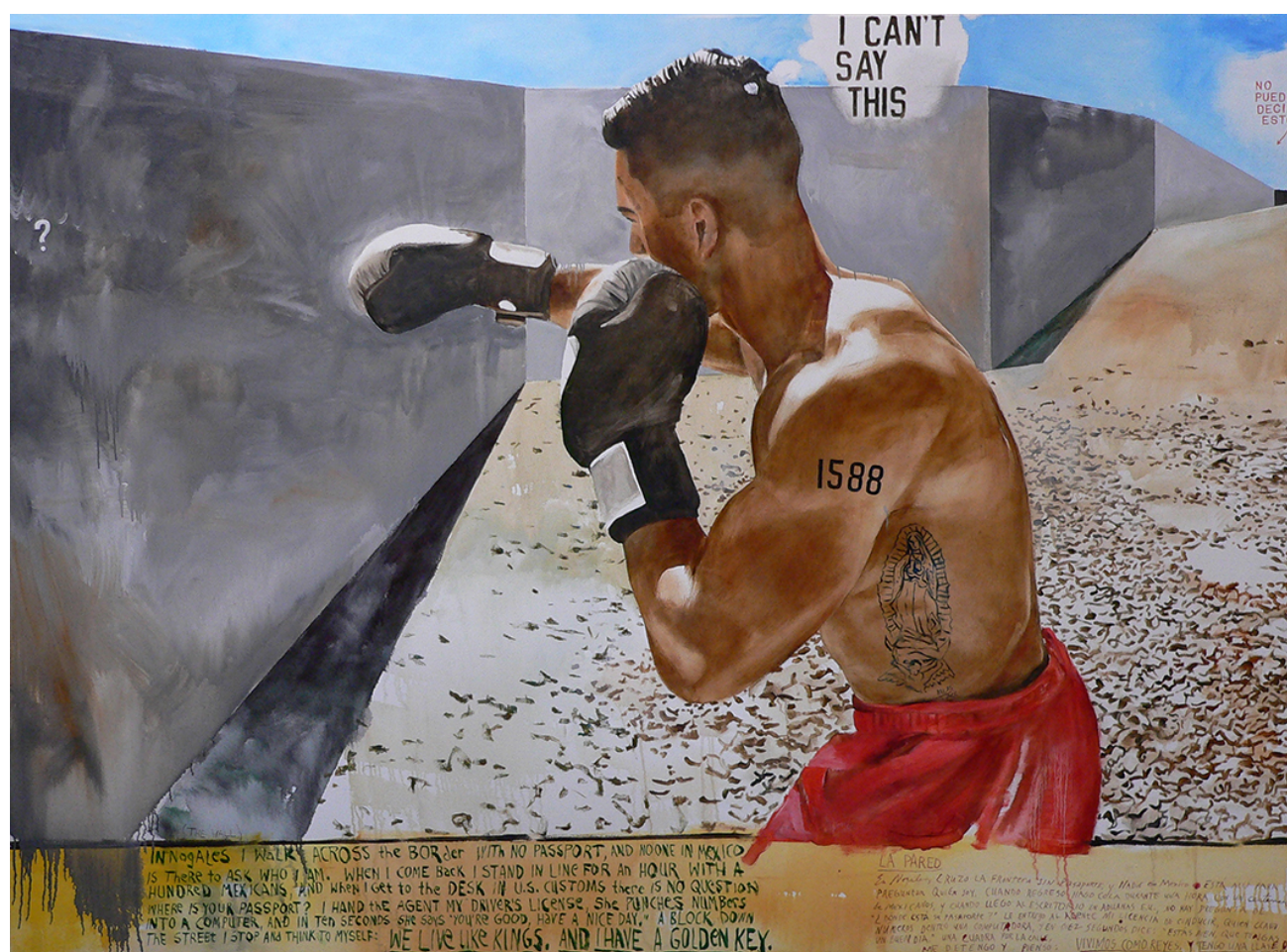
In reference to “Checkered Passed (Tied) (#1574)” (illustrated above), the artist writes: “‘Checkered Passed (Tied) (#1574)’ is a painting that touches on race and all of the discussions and controversy in the United States these days. The black model has a white arm and the white model has a black arm. Visually thus, they are tied to one another (my original title for the painting was ‘Tied’). Further, note the lines literally tying the two models together.

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“However, there is certainly a lot of wordplay going on. Being in a race is one thing, and tying instead of winning is another. The checkered flag signifies the winner in a race. Here the winning flag has been passed to the black model, which is literally pictured in the image. And, the whole history of race in this country is a sordid (i.e. checkered) past. In my mind the words and the image keep going around in circles—in a great way, and in an optimistic way as well. (It’s about time.)”

Indeed—words, stories, and memories are an integral element of much of Balas’s paintings and works on paper. In his monumental canvas “The Wall (La Pared), Nogales (No Puedo Decir Esto) (#1588)” (pictured below), the artist begins at the bottom left: “In Nogales, I walk across the border with no passport, and no one in Mexico is there to ask who I am. . .” Living between Denver, Colorado and Tucson, Arizona, Balas is witness to the realities and hardships related to race and nationality which have been brought to the fore especially in recent years.



Nonetheless, many of the themes running through Balas’s work touch upon his development as an artist [“This Time Around (#1237)”]; art history and the politics of the art world [“Roy Lichtenstein (#1694)” from the artist’s “Muse/Museum” series]; and (queer) sexuality [“First Draft (#1707)”].

A 1995 recipient of an Individual Fellowship in Painting from the National Endowment for the Arts, Balas is now represented in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Denver Art Museum, Colorado; the Tucson Museum of Art, Arizona; the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, Iowa; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; the 21c Museum, Louisville, Kentucky; the Albuquerque Museum, New Mexico; and the Usiminas Cultural Institute, Ipatinga, Minas Gerais, Brazil; among others.

For more information and images please contact Brian Paul Clamp, Principal, or see www.clampart.com.
Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Image 1: © Jack Balas, "Checkered Passed (Tied) (#1574)," 2018, Oil and enamel on canvas, 44 x 76 inches.

Image 2: © Jack Balas, "The Wall (La Pared), Nogales (No Puedo Decir Esto) (#1588)," 2018, Oil, enamel, and ink on canvas.