

# KASPER CONTEMPORARY

## CHRISTOPHER RICO

### “Monk”

Online Exhibition @ Artsy & OnlineViewRoom.com

May 9 - June 12, 2022

Kasper Contemporary is pleased to present **“Monk,”** a brand-new series of gestural abstract paintings by **Christopher Rico**.

Over the course of the pandemic, artist Christopher Rico did what many of the great jazz musicians do, he 'shedded'; He locked himself away and practiced his gestures and mark-making for days on end in isolation. During that time, he listened to a lot of jazz music, particularly the work of Thelonious Monk, to whom he dedicates his latest painting series, "Monk."

Music, perhaps the most abstract of all art forms, relies on rhythm and time as foundational elements of composition, and what Monk did was to free himself from the traditional constraints of what was considered music. Monk's compositions detach rhythm and time in ways that spoke to Rico visually, and very much of the moment of history we have lived through. Rico began to see the physical act of painting as musical forms, with harmony and tempo, structures that could be played against one another in interesting ways.

The work in "Monk" explores the absence of line, utilizing reflection and light as medium to unify an apparent binary. What is left is a continuum of visual expression, seemingly bifurcated by Newmanesque “zips” but in actuality unified by them. It has been long accepted that colors have tonality and bring about associations deep within our consciousness. Like the jazz greats before, it is the spaces between the “notes” that Rico chooses not to play that convey their own meaningfulness and significance.

The works on yupo paper (a synthetic paper from Japan) are repetitive, seemingly spontaneous, and immediate. They are a chance to explore color theory but are also a meditative daily practice of scales and changes. If one listens closely, there are audible resonances to the color combinations and loose but intentional gestures.

Improvisation, as we know from music, is earned. It is based on years of practice and dedication to understanding one's instrument. Likewise, gestural abstraction is an earned practice of expression rooted in understanding the rules and knowing how to break them. Picasso famously said that it takes a very long time to become young; our way back to the freedom and inhibition of childhood mark-making is an arduous path not to be traveled lightly. As adults, we have to peel back layers upon layers of judgment and self-criticism to liberate ourselves again. Rico sees this body of work as his first step to learning to run free with abandon, but with all the knowledge of half a lifetime behind it.

Christopher Rico is an American painter living and working in South Carolina. He received his Master of Arts from Clemson University, SC. Rico has exhibited internationally in Australia, England and Germany, in regional art museums in South Carolina as well as commercial galleries in New York, Atlanta, and New Orleans.

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