



JESSE MOCKRIN, *Untitled 10 (First Romance)*, 2025,
Graphite on paper, 12 x 9 in (30.5 x 22.9 cm) (unframed), 13
3/4 x 10 3/4 in (34.9 x 27.3 cm) (framed)

52 WALKER ST | OCT 10 – NOV 1, 2025

Jesse Mockrin

First Romance

James Cohan is pleased to present *First Romance*, a new series of drawings by Jesse Mockrin, on view at 52 Walker from October 10 through November 1, 2025. This marks Mockrin's second solo exhibition with James Cohan and is presented concurrently with Jesse Mockrin: *Echo*, the first major museum exhibition of the artist's work at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, on view through March 2026. A conversation between Mockrin and arts writer Jacoba Urist, who contributed to the exhibition catalogue for *Echo* will take place at 52 Walker on Saturday, October 11 at 2 PM, followed by a book-signing.

Jesse Mockrin is known for making paintings and drawings that extract details from art historical references, often European Old Masters, recontextualizing cultural narratives through a contemporary feminist lens. Recent work has drawn our attention to centuries of Biblical and mythic women whose canonical stories were written for and

by men, and whose likenesses were painted largely by male artists for male patrons. In her latest series of graphite drawings, Mockrin turns her attention to boys in uniform.

First Romance juxtaposes the struggles of male youth in today's America, masculinity on film, the underage soldiers of the Civil War, present-day Civil War reenactors, and Italian Renaissance paintings of young noblemen and soldiers. Mockrin traces a developing history of performative dress for battle, from ornate medieval armor to Western flannel shirts. These uniforms are signifiers of masculinity, advertising the nationality, allegiance, rank, and character of the boys they adorn even as they flatten individuality. She plays up the contrast between the awkward physicality of her subjects and the ornate weaponry they wield, as if they are naively playing dress up.

This series is rooted in Mockrin's ongoing study of aestheticized masculinity – past bodies of work have taken Korean pop idols, androgynous Gucci models and the rakish boys of John Singer Sargent as her disparate sources. She upends and makes strange Western art historical precedents for hypermasculine and hyperfeminine beauty ideals, obscuring gendered features to emphasize androgyny. For the artist, this gender fluidity allows for multiplicities of interpretation, desire, and desirability and points to the changing codes of gender across time and culture.

Mockrin's drawings showcase her exquisite draftsmanship and her dedication to adhering to historical modes of working. Her choice of paper is reminiscent of what is commonly referred to as Venetian blue paper, used widely in Western Europe from the 14th to the 18th century and prized for allowing for strong contrasts between light and dark. Mockrin uses black and white graphite pencil to create these evocative and intricately detailed images. She then employs anachronistic, photographic modes of cropping and framing to enliven and destabilize historical material.

Mockrin began this series by reading "Of Age: Boy Soldiers and Military Power in the Civil War Era" by Rebecca Jo Plant and Frances M. Clarke, which explores the prevalence of underage soldiers who fought in the Civil War. "As the mother of two pre-teen boys," Mockrin says, "I was especially moved by the nineteenth century photographs of the underage soldiers—their overconfidence and vulnerability, their excitement and trepidation, and the horrors they must inevitably have faced."

Jesse Mockrin (b. 1981, Silver Spring, MD) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; Center of International Contemporary Art of Vancouver, Canada; James Cohan, New York; Night Gallery, Los Angeles; Nathalie Karg Gallery, New York; and Galerie Perrotin, Seoul. Her work was most recently featured in the 16th Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art, and she has been included in group exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art, Texas; The Bunker, West Palm Beach; the Rubell Museum, Washington, DC; Perrotin, Paris; Mrs., Queens; James Cohan, New York; Friends Indeed, San Francisco; SPURS Gallery, Beijing; and Almine Rech, Brussels, among others.

Her work is in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; Institute of Contemporary Art Miami, FL; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA; Rubell Collection, Miami, FL; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; Aurora Museum, Shanghai, China; Hans-Joachim and Gisa Sander Foundation, Darmstadt, Germany; Mougins Museum, Mougins, France; KRC Collection, Voorschoten, Netherlands; and the Xiao Museum, Rizhao, China, among others. Mockrin lives and works in Philadelphia, PA.

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