



Denver + Marfa rulegallery.com  
info@rulegallery.com 303-800-6776

# Westword

## Caleb Hahne One Sun at RULE Gallery

Michael Paglia / January 30, 2020



Caleb Hahne's "Window (New York)," acrylic on canvas. Wes Magyar

A small show can be just as strong as an enormous one. I was reminded of this as soon as I walked through the door of Rule Gallery to see Caleb Hahne: One Sun. The tiny solo, with just seven paintings — most of them intimately scaled — that function as a single body of work makes a very big impression.

Caleb Hahne emerged on the Denver scene a half-dozen years ago, just as he completed his BFA at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design in 2014.

His work took off immediately, and he's exhibited pieces not only here, but in Los Angeles, New York, Montreal, Berlin and the United Kingdom.

In the One Sun paintings, Hahne continues exploring his own identity through memories of his childhood. The figures, all young males, are mostly depicted from behind or from the side, so that their faces have been somewhat obscured. The poses they take are imaginative, and are used to carry forward the

narrative. There's an implicit story of a kid sneaking out of the house in one of the few large-ish paintings, "Window (New York)." The body, seen from the rear, is in a contrapposto position, with one leg on the sill and the other hanging down the wall as he turns his body to make his escape.

Hahne's drafting of the human form in characterful stances has a lyric quality and lends his paintings a kind of elegance. His brushwork is extremely confident and fairly bold, especially considering the representational imagery he's conveying, without sacrificing any details: Our mind's eye fills in what's missing. In "Morning Sun," for example, a guy's head is seen from the back, his fingers gripping the back of his neck. He's looking at the sunrise, which is represented by the pinkish-orangey field that surrounds him. In this painting, as in many others, Hahne juggles hot and cold shades, often versions of that pink-and-orange combination, using them for both skin and skies, set against different shades of strong, clear blue. This creates strong contrasts between parts of the compositions, which Hahne exploits to great effect.



Caleb Hahne acrylic-on-canvas paintings (left to right) "Pier," "Night Walk" and "Self Portrait with Bluets (Cheesman Park)." Wes Magyar

The One Sun paintings have a freshness that's quite an accomplishment, given the long tradition of figurative art, and despite the way they reveal Hahne's awareness of the context of historic modern art updated by contemporary approaches. As advanced as they are in a painterly sense, a few of the pieces have a classic appeal, and even echo the abstract end of Fairfield Porter's style. In "Pier," for instance, a youngster in a T-shirt, jeans and beach hat, all done in different blues, leans against a railing with the sea falling in behind. Hahne has employed the back of another figure rendered in the extreme foreground to introduce a strong vertical element on the entire left side, an interesting technique that is also used in the marvelous "Self Portrait With Bluets (Cheesman Park)," in which crossed legs create a zigzagging shape down the center of the canvas.

While all of the One Sun paintings function as a body of work, a couple are clearly different from the rest, with a magical or dream-like mood. One is "Fountain," a vaporous image of an outstretched arm carried out in a color only slightly different from the background; the other is "Night Walk," where the crossed feet that anchor it stand out from the ground.



Caleb Hahne "The Pier," acrylic on canvas. Wes Magyar