

Daniel Crews-Chubb

Pareidolia

12.05.2026

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MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is pleased to present *Pareidolia*, an exhibition of new paintings by London-based artist Daniel Crews-Chubb.

The show takes its title from a phenomenon most people have experienced without having a word for it: the momentary conviction that a water stain is a face, that a rock formation holds a figure, that something inert is looking back. Pareidolia is the brain doing what it was built to do - imposing sense on noise, pattern on chaos.

Standing in front of these works, recognition arrives before intention does. A jaw surfaces through layers of poured ink and smeared oil; an eye socket holds its place for a second before the charcoal lines around it pull apart into something else entirely. This is not ambiguity as a stylistic choice but as a structural condition. "The paintings are illusionistic," Crews-Chubb has said, "walking a tightrope between figuration and abstraction."

Crews-Chubb rarely uses brushes. Paint goes on with his hands, pressed and sculpted directly into the surface. Sand is embedded into the canvas. Fragments of other works from the studio are collaged in, torn back, reworked. The charcoal lines that finally trace the contours of a face are drawn last, or near last, over weeks of accumulated decisions - giving each painting what he calls its "patina," a record of everything it took to arrive at the image.

For this exhibition, conceived in close dialogue with the particular intimacy of Pièce Unique, Crews-Chubb presents three works. *Immortal XXXVIII* and *Immortal XXXIX* (2026) are two large-scale paintings from an ongoing series that draw not on any specific statue or source but on something more like cultural memory - the accumulated impression of Greek, Roman, and pre-Columbian figures encountered in museums and on travels, monumental but worn, authoritative but eroding. *Mask XXIV* (2026), smaller and more frontal, pushes the question further: how little does a face need to give before it is recognised? Crews-Chubb's interest in Cubism - in Braque's *Woman with a Mandolin*, in Picasso's *Portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler* - is visible here, in the way multiple viewpoints collapse into a single unstable

surface, the image almost disappearing into its own making.

What makes these paintings linger is the discomfort of being implicated in them. Pareidolia is usually described as a cognitive quirk, a misfiring of pattern recognition - but Crews-Chubb treats it as something closer to a defining condition of consciousness, the proof that the mind cannot encounter the world neutrally. To look at these paintings is to watch that process happen in real time: the figure assembles itself out of ink and sand and charcoal, and the accumulated pressure of a hand, and the brain reaches toward it involuntarily, helplessly, the way it has always reached toward faces.

Daniel Crews-Chubb

Daniel Crews-Chubb (b. 1984, Northampton, United Kingdom) is a London-based painter whose mixed-media works wrestle with the human condition and modes of self-expression. His paintings pay homage to Abstract Expressionism, both in their gestural figuration that looks to Willem de Kooning and playful, improvisational use of collage, which recalls the three-dimensional quality of Robert Rauschenberg's practice. Other works, like *Flowers* (after Van Gogh), channel earlier art-historical references, and many of the artist's paintings look all the way back to the iconography of ancient Greece and Paleolithic totems like the Venus of Willendorf.

While his work mines our contemporary visual culture, Crews-Chubb intertwines canonical sources and classical allusions in paintings that are at once fantastical and relevant. He selects archetypes and symbols at will to create a highly personal, idiosyncratic lexicon of human and bestial figures. The artist employs collage and impasto techniques to construct his paintings, working and reworking his surfaces to dizzying effect until they seem at once to cohere and be on the verge of breaking apart. While loosely figural, his subjects function as prompts and containers for a wide-ranging and virtuosic mark-making.

Artwork details

Daniel Crews-Chubb
Immortal XXXVIII, 2026
Oil, acrylic, charcoal, spray paint, ink, sand and collaged fabrics on canvas
250 x 200 x 5 cm

Daniel Crews-Chubb
Immortal XXXIX, 2026
Oil, acrylic, charcoal, spray paint, ink, sand and collaged fabrics on canvas
150 x 120 cm

Daniel Crews-Chubb
Mask XXIV, 2026
Oil, acrylic, ink, spray paint, charcoal, sand and collaged fabrics on canvas
75 x 55 cm