

ESSENCE OF BEING



SAMUEL E VÁZQUEZ

CSB | fine arts



Solo Exhibition

ESSENCE OF BEING

Samuel E Vázquez

October 2 - November 3, 2025

Opening reception:
Thursday, October 2, 6–8 pm

CSB Fine Arts



CONTENTS

Introduction	8
Essence of Being: The Abstractions of Samuel E. Vázquez	10
Artworks	14
Biography	26
Artist Statement	26
Exhibitions	28
Talks & Lectures	29
Gratitude and Commitment	30



INTRODUCTION



Essence of Being marks the inaugural exhibition of CSB Fine Arts and introduces audiences to the commanding abstractions of Samuel E. Vázquez.

Born in Puerto Rico and raised in New York, Vázquez’s practice emerges from the graffiti and hip-hop movements that defined the city’s cultural fabric in the 1980s. Over the years, he has forged a visual language where rhythm, gesture, and memory converge into radiant fields of color and form. His canvases pulse with the life of the metropolis while offering meditations on identity, resilience, and the act of creation itself.

This exhibition not only traces the arc of an artist who transforms lived experience into abstraction but also opens a new chapter for CSB Fine Arts, whose mission is to amplify Puerto Rican and Latin American voices within contemporary art.

ESSENCE OF BEING:

The Abstractions of Samuel E. Vázquez



Essence of Being inaugurates CSB Fine Arts with the work of Samuel E. Vázquez, an artist whose career embodies the crossings and tensions of Puerto Rican and New York cultures. Born in Puerto Rico and raised in Harlem/Spanish Harlem, Vázquez came of age during the 1980s, when graffiti and hip-hop emerged as vital forms of expression in communities too often excluded from the cultural mainstream. These movements provided him not only with a language of rhythm and gesture but also with a philosophy of transformation: of claiming visibility, of making beauty out of what the world overlooked or discarded.

This sensibility extends into his studio practice. Alongside his vibrant abstractions, Vázquez creates assemblages that reimagine what others deem refuse—wood, metal, paper, fragments of the everyday—repurposed into works that pulse with dignity and vitality. In this act of reconfiguration, he aligns with a broader lineage in Latin American art, where artists from Puerto Rico to Brazil to Mexico have long redefined the very boundaries of material, imbuing the remnants of modern life with new meaning.

His canvases, meanwhile, vibrate with movement: bold strokes, layered textures, and shifting fields of color that echo both the density of the city and the improvisational freedom of music. The syncopated rhythms of jazz and the pulse of hip-hop infuse his work, turning painting into a visual equivalent of sound—at once spontaneous and intensely structured. Yet beyond rhythm and form, his abstractions are meditations on identity, resilience, and the persistence of memory. They invite us into the space between chaos and order, where histories—personal and collective, Puerto Rican and diasporic—find expression in color and form.



Essence of Being is thus both a milestone in Vázquez’s career and a statement of purpose for CSB Fine Arts. It celebrates an artist who has transmuted the urgency of the street and the remnants of the everyday into a refined painterly idiom, and it affirms the gallery’s mission to amplify Puerto Rican and Latin American voices in the global field of contemporary art.

ARTWORKS

#36



#39



#45



#46



#47



#511



#49



#53





#36, 2017
Samuel E Vázquez

Found materials, acrylic, graphite, ink, and latex on paper
24 x 18 inches



#39, 2017
Samuel E Vázquez

Found materials, acrylic, graphite, ink, and latex on paper
24 x 18 inches



#45, 2017
Samuel E Vázquez

Found materials, acrylic, graphite, ink, and latex on paper
24 x 18 inches



#46, 2017
Samuel E Vázquez

Found materials, acrylic, graphite, ink, and latex on paper
24 x 18 inches



#47, 2017
Samuel E Vázquez

Found materials, acrylic, graphite, ink, and latex on paper
24 x 18 inches



#511, 2025
Samuel E Vázquez

Found materials, acrylic, ink, spray enamel and latex on panel
24 h x 30 w



#49, 2017
Samuel E Vázquez

Found materials, acrylic, graphite, ink, and latex on panel
24 h x 36 w



#53, 2017
Samuel E Vázquez

Found materials, acrylic, graphite, ink, spray enamel, and latex on panel
48 x 48 inches



Automatic Notes Thirst Notes Phrasing Exemption,
2016.

Acrylic, graphite, ink, spray enamel,
and latex on panel.
48 x 48 inches

BIOGRAPHY

Samuel E Vázquez (b. 1970, San Juan, Puerto Rico) is a contemporary visual artist. He has exhibited along-side Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, Sam Gilliam, Sabina Klein, Sam Francis, Keith Haring, Torrick “Toxic” Ablack, and Futura 2000 among others.

Vázquez was a feature artist in special programming for Ai Weiwei: According to What? exhibition. His work is rooted in the New York City subway painting era of the 1970s and 80s and informed by the work of Ed Clark, Mimmo Rotella, Jacques Villeglé, Jackson Pollock, and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My studio practice investigates humanity’s resilience to rise above social constructs. Through the use of diverse materials these investigations reveal the inner strength, often found in underserved communities, to thrive amid chaos. Via a rigorous process of applying layers of found materials and markings, my work evokes the effects of the systematic neglect that is thrust upon our supposedly insignificant inner city communities. In painting, I pursue abstract methods of home.



EXHIBITIONS

Long-Sharp Gallery
NVP - Contemporary Art Project
Van Der Plas Gallery
Indianapolis Art Center
Clowes Memorial Hall at Butler Art Center
Rapp Family Gallery at Indiana Landmarks Center
Indianapolis Museum of Art Galleries at Newfields
Indianapolis International Airport
Christel DeHaan Fine Art Center Gallery at University of Indianapolis
Gallery 924 at Arts Council of Indianapolis
The 646
Indianapolis Public Library Central Branch
Beard Art Center at Indiana Wesleyan University
Cultural Arts Gallery at IUPUI
The Lobby at Madam Walker Center
Bread of Life
Thruspace
Urban Element 2
Grace Gallery

ARTS & LECTURES

Bubbles & Tags, Jordan College of the Arts
Cultural Manifesto, NPR
Good Vibrations, WQRT
Indiana Arts Homecoming, Indiana Historical Society
Courageous Conversations, Indiana State Museum
Style & Frequency, Richard E. Peeler Art Center at DePauw University
Fresh Dressed, The Toby at Newfields
City as Canvas: New York City Graffiti from the 70s & 80s, Newfields
TILT: An Arts and Humanities Mixes, Gallery 924
From Subways to Gallery Walls, New York City
College of Technology-CUNY
Wrinkles of the City: La Havana, Heartland Film Festival
Clowes Conversations, Clowes Memorial Hall at Butler Arts Center
Style Wars: Ai Weiwei Edition, The Toby at Newfields
New York City 1980s, Cuyahoga Community College

GRATITUDE AND COMMITMENT

This inaugural exhibition would not have been possible without the trust and vision of Samuel E. Vázquez, whose work embodies the vitality and resilience of Puerto Rican and Latin American creativity. I extend my deepest gratitude to him for entrusting CSB Fine Arts with this important moment in his career.

I also thank our friends, supporters, and community for believing in the mission of amplifying underrepresented voices and making space for dialogue through art. Essence of Being is not only a celebration of an artist’s journey but also the beginning of a collective endeavor—one that reaffirms our commitment to sharing stories that connect, challenge, and inspire.

His canvases pulse with movement—layered strokes and shifting textures that echo the architecture and soundscape of New York—yet within this intensity lies a search for balance and presence. Influenced by the improvisation of jazz and the beat of hip-hop, his works invite viewers to pause, reflect, and inhabit the space between chaos and harmony.

This exhibition marks both a milestone in the artist’s journey and the beginning of CSB Fine Arts’ mission to champion Puerto Rican and Latin American voices in contemporary art.

— **Carolina Santiago**, Founder & Director

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