



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ahkeem Shaw Selected as Finalist for Art Melanated's SAVAGE Emerging Artist Competition

Launch Day Collection to Exhibit February 14 – March 14, 2026 at Band of Vices, Los Angeles

Los Angeles, CA – February 9, 2026 — Peppers Media Group (PMG) is proud to announce that **Ahkeem Shaw** has been selected as a finalist for the inaugural **SAVAGE Emerging Artist Competition**, presented by **Art Melanated**. Shaw's acclaimed *Launch Day* collection will be featured in the group exhibition opening Saturday, February 14, 2026, and running through March 14, 2026, at **Band of Vices in Los Angeles**.

Curated by Art Melanated and juried by a distinguished panel of collectors, curators, and industry professionals, SAVAGE celebrates emerging artists whose work reflects bold cultural expression, innovation, and the future of contemporary art. The exhibition is named in honor of **Augusta Savage**—trailblazing sculptor, educator, and champion of Black artists—whose legacy of creating access and opportunity continues to inspire new generations.

Ahead of the gallery opening, **Shaw has already sold three original paintings from the *Launch Day* collection**, an early signal of strong collector interest and momentum for the rising artist. The body of work explores imagination, resilience, and the courage required to take a leap, using familiar symbols and spatial presence to invite reflection, movement, and shared experience.

“Being selected as a finalist for SAVAGE is an honor,” said Shaw. **“To have this work shown at Band of Vices, in conversation with other powerful emerging voices, feels like an important moment in the journey of *Launch Day*.”**

“We're honored to present Ahkeem's work as part of this exhibition, and we're excited for what lies ahead”
— Sol Aponte, CEO & Co-Founder, Art Melanated

“This opportunity was a natural alignment for Ahkeem and his work. To be recognized by the panel alongside such a strong group of emerging artists, and to have his originals nearly sold out ahead of opening, speaks to his ability to tell stories through his work that genuinely move people.” — Daimion Peppers, CEO, Peppers Media Group (PMG)

The opening reception will take place on February 14, 2026, with additional programming planned throughout the run of the exhibition, including a media day and artist features during opening weekend.

Exhibition Details

SAVAGE Emerging Artist Exhibition

Dates:

February 14 – March 14, 2026

Opening Reception:

Saturday, February 14, 2026

Location:

Band of Vices
1700 S. Santa Fe Ave, Suite 371
Los Angeles, CA 90021



Notes to editor

About Peppers Media Group

Peppers Media Group (PMG) is a multidisciplinary media and creative company operating at the intersection of art, culture, and technology. Through its ecosystem—including artist representation, cultural programming, and innovative publishing—PMG supports emerging talent and builds platforms that elevate storytelling, creative expression, and community impact.

About Ahkeem Shaw

Ahkeem Shaw is a visual artist working across painting, murals, and public installations. His practice explores imagination, cultural memory, and shared experience, creating work that invites people to gather, reflect, and connect. Shaw's *Launch Day* collection debuted during Miami Art Week and continues to gain national attention for its emotional resonance and accessible visual language.

About SAVAGE

The SAVAGE Emerging Artist Competition brings together a curated selection of emerging artists whose work is exhibited at a leading Los Angeles gallery. Chosen by a respected panel of collectors, curators, and industry professionals, SAVAGE offers a national platform for new voices and bold creative visions. Named in honor of Augusta Savage—who opened the Salon of Contemporary Negro Art in Harlem in 1939—the competition continues her mission of uplifting emerging artists and celebrating the transformative power of art.

About Art Melanated

Founded by husband-and-wife team Sol Aponte and Jennia Fredrique Aponte, Art Melanated is a national arts and culture platform rooted in visibility, preservation, and celebration. What began as a documentary initiative has evolved into a nomadic movement—curating exhibitions, summits, and creative experiences that amplify artists of the diaspora. Guided by intention, love, and community, Art Melanated is committed to activating art with purpose and building lasting cultural impact.

About Band of Vices

Established in 2015, Band of Vices is an internationally recognized platform for art and culture dedicated to emerging and mid-career artists, with a deep commitment to inclusion. Founded on the belief that what was once labeled a “vice” for marginalized communities is now a source of power, Band of Vices rejects exclusivity and embraces uniqueness, diversity, and love—creating space for historically undervalued voices to be seen and celebrated.

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