FLOOR 2

GRIEF AND GRIEVANCE

LaToya Ruby Frazier
b. 1982, Braddock, PA

This wall, left to right:

(The following artist's texts are excerpts from the book *The Notion of Family*, selected and edited by the exhibition curators.)

***1980s Welcome to Historic Braddock Signage and a Lightbulb*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

Along the ancient path of the Monongahela River, Braddock, Pennsylvania, sits in the eastern region of Allegheny County, approximately nine miles outside of Pittsburgh.

A historic industrial suburb, Braddock is home to Andrew Carnegie's first steel mill, the Edgar Thomson Works, which has operated since 1875 and is the last functioning steel mill in the region.

***Self portrait (March 10am)*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

A descendent of
Scottish
African
Braddonian
Blue-collar
Steel workers
I embrace my heritage.
Looking both inwardly and outwardly, I desire to move beyond boundaries. Similar to Annie, Lucy, and Xuela, heroines from a Jamaica Kincaid novel, I am in search of a new space, place, and time. There is a tight pressure and sharp piercing pain in my chest. The lack of deep sleep has not worn off. I feel a sense of imbalance.

***Home on Braddock Avenue*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2007**

Grandma Ruby, Mom, and I grew up in significantly different social and economic climates; each of us are markers along a larger historical timeline. Grandma Ruby, born in 1925, witnessed Braddock's prosperous days of department stores, theaters, and restaurants. Mom, born in 1959, witnessed the close of the steel mills, white flight, and disinvestment at the federal, state, and local levels. I was born in 1982. I witnessed as the War on Drugs decimated my family and community.

The main street was Braddock Avenue. Grandma Ruby always described it: "There use to be three theaters, the Capital, the Paramount, and the Times. There were restaurants, five-and-dime stores, children stores, and furniture stores. Aww, we use to have everything."

By the 1980s, when my generation walked the streets, most of the steel mills were closed and there were few businesses left: twelve bars, three jitney stations, Bell's Market, Stromboli's Poultry Market, the pawn shop, Braddock News, Al's Market, and one restaurant, which was the cafeteria in Braddock Hospital.

***Grandma Ruby holding her babies*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2002**

Grandma Ruby's husband died on Mom's first birthday. Left to raise six children during the '60s could not have been an easy task. She worked as a manager for Goodwill. Grandma Ruby internalized the idea that Black women aren't supposed to cry; they're to remain silent and endure suffering.

***1990 Family Portrait at Kmart (Mom, Brandy, Brandon and Me)*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

Grandma Ruby's interior design was a firewall that blocked external forces. She would not be subjugated to a lesser status.

Fourth generation in a lineage of women, Mom sent me to live with Grandma Ruby. Mom believed it was the better and safer environment for me. I was raised under Grandma Ruby's protection and care off Eighth Street, at 805 Washington Avenue.

The shadow from the steel mill always hovered above us.

***The Bottom*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

Behind this 1980s Mercury Grand Marquis, where BOC Gases now stands, is the former site of the Talbot Towers, a 210-unit Allegheny County housing project where I was born and raised, between Ninth and Tenth Street on Washington Avenue.

Built in 1956, Talbot Towers was demolished in 1990, two years after resident Cheryl Sanders and her neighbors filed a housing-discrimination lawsuit that claimed Allegheny

County clustered Black residents in public housing into certain communities. In 1994 the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's admission that it was party to a decades-long system of discriminatory housing resulted in the Fair Housing Service Center. The Sanders Consent Decree gave Allegheny Country an opportunity to desegregate.

BOC Gases is the industrial gases business of the British Oxygen Company Group, the worldwide industrial gases, vacuum technologies, and distribution services company for the steel industry. It produces more than fifty thousand tons of gas worldwide. Located at Eleventh Street and Washington Avenue, BOC Gases encroaches on remaining residents' property. Day and night, BOC Gases emits an industrial hissing sound that reverberates throughout the borough.

The haze that forms the sky is from millions of tiny particles. They pass through my lungs and into my bloodstream. Like carbon monoxide, they are odorless and have the potential to kill.

***Mom Holding Mr. Art*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2005**

Mom's boyfriend, Mr. Art, was my rival for Mom's affection.

Detached and numb, he reminded me of Stan, the father from Charles Burnett's film *Killer of Sheep*. Working menial wage jobs is exhausting. It's never enough to build a foundation.

The collapse of the steel industry throughout the 1970s and '80s limited upward mobility. A majority of us would never own our homes and businesses or gain access to higher education or better jobs. For generations we inherited debts we did not owe.

Our husbands, brothers, sons, and boyfriends were relegated to menial wage jobs, underemployment, or layoffs. Undermined by the mainstream economy, social isolation kept them company.

***Mom and her cat Ziggy on American redcross*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2005**

A grandmother

A mother

A nurse's aide

A caregiver

And lover of cats

Mom is a humanitarian who makes jitney trips to and from food banks, to ensure community members without transportation in isolated food deserts receive food to eat.

Seldom is there relief or aid for Black women living below the poverty line in our healthcare system. Tired of waiting in emergency rooms and being told by UPMC doctors that her migraines, chest pains, seizures, and shortness of breath are psychological. Mom stays inside. She has become a prisoner in her home.

Emotional fatigue has erected barriers around us.

***Grandma Ruby's Installation*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2002**

They are in every room of the house, sitting at the table, on her couches, standing on the mantle above the fireplace. Lately I wonder if her compulsive collecting has anything to do with her lacking close relationships with her real children. "These are my children, my babies," she would say as she groomed them and chain-smoked Pall Malls. I too became part of her collection.

She adorned me.

I was a porcelain doll she kept locked away in a glass case until she decided to take me out and exhibit me. "You are one of my dolls. I dressed you like a baby doll because I wanted to. Everybody saw you. You were so cute."

I wore a big, light-blue dress that had ruffles and lace around it, with a fluffy white slip underneath that made it look full. She put a part in the middle of my head and put two large twist pigtails with light blue ribbons and white hair ballies wrapped around them. She made me wear white stockings and Mary Jane shoes. When I outgrew Grandma Ruby's dresses she would always say, "I want to smash you back into a little doll."

***The Bedroom I Shared with Grandma Ruby (227 Holland Avenue)*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2009**

After Gramps passed away in the house at 227 Holland Avenue, Grandma Ruby moved to a tiny apartment with the Brandywine Agency senior citizens housing, at 40 Holland Avenue.

LaToya Ruby Frazier
b. 1982, Braddock, PA

This wall, left to right:

(The following artist's texts are excerpts from the book *The Notion of Family*, selected and edited by the exhibition curators.)

***UPMC Global Corporation*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2011**

Braddock Hospital served our community from June 27, 1906 to January 31, 2010. Braddock Hospital merged with University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) in 1996. In October 2009, the community found out that UPMC chose to close our hospital due to claims it was underutilized and losing money.

***Momme Portrait Series (Floral Comforter)*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2008**

Mom and I found another way to keep making portraits of one another without showing the domestic interior. We took our mattresses, stood them upright against the wall, and draped them with our comforters. For approximately one hour, we would quietly rotate, posing for each other and mimicking each other in front of the camera. The bedroom became a stage and a studio.

***UPMC Professional Building Doctors' Offices*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2011**

A historical hospital building

A community center

A cafeteria and restaurant

123 licensed beds

652 employees

277,000-square-foot facility

A behavioral health/drug and alcohol detox and rehabilitation program

Braddock Council president Jesse Brown challenged the UPMC decision to abandon our town. The Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services conducted an investigation. The final settlement allocated shuttles to health-care services in a nearby neighborhood for outpatient service, and extended hours at the Braddock Family Health Center.

***Grandma Ruby on her bed*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2005**

Grandma Ruby would shout our nicknames while she was in bed: "Midgie! Pee Wee! Cookie! Toy!" Sometimes she would call on the Lord. The doctor told us that if he operated on her, there would only be a fifteen percent chance the cancer would go away. Grandma Ruby waited a few days. I supported her decision. "Don't worry, Toy, I'll tell you when," she calmly told me.

Third quarter of the Super Bowl Playoffs, Steelers-Ravens game, Mom called again. Grandma Ruby said she could not breathe. There was too much fluid in her lungs. Her heart was overworked from pumping for oxygen. She could see Gramps. Her organs failed.

Grandma Ruby passed away in UPMC Braddock Hospital January 18, 2009, at 9:15 pm.

***Mom making an image of me*, from the series *The Notion of Family*, 2008**

Mom was playing her 45 records. She put on her favorite song, "Girls Nite Out" by Tyler Collins, because it was our night to go out drinking. "It's irritating when you put that camera in my face. Why do you like taking pictures of me?" she said. Because it's my way of accepting you as you are and gaining back all that time we lost. The shutter clicked, then we switched places. I asked her, "What do you see when you look at me?" She looked through the view finder and said, "I see a lot of me in you. It's like you're lost, like you don't have nobody. You got your mother, but right now you don't understand." She paused and made a picture of me.

All works:

Gelatin silver print
Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery,
New York and Brussels

LaToya Ruby Frazier
b. 1982, Braddock, PA

LaToya Ruby Frazier uses photography to contend with the human costs of racial capitalism, focusing on situations in which the pursuit of financial gain for some is prioritized over long-term prosperity for all. Born in the former steel mill town of Braddock, Pennsylvania, Frazier challenges the predominant political narrative that characterizes the Rust Belt as the seat of the white resentment driving reactionary politics in the United States today. Her photographs—which are often linked to the social documentary tradition of Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, and Gordon Parks—insert Frazier and her family into a still-unfolding history of deindustrialization in order to represent and validate Black loss.

Frazier's project *The Notion of Family* (2001–14) tells the story of three generations of Black women whose lives are financially, biologically, and emotionally bound to the boom-and-bust history of Braddock itself. In 1873 Andrew Carnegie built one of America's first steel mills in Braddock. More than a century later, Frazier and her working-class Black family are forced to grapple with the negative repercussions of the steel industry's demise. In photographs of crumbling buildings, we see the effects of divestment and economic decline on the city itself. A photograph of Frazier's grandmother, upright and staring into the distance, reminds viewers that the toxins that ultimately killed her—and that made Frazier and her mother chronically ill—are vestiges of the steel mill that once fueled Braddock's prosperity. Part exposé, part family album, the series documents the mechanisms driving racial inequality and the social bonds that sustain Black communities on the brink of collapse.

—Maya Harakawa

Dawoud Bey
b. 1953, Queens, NY

Left to right:

***Imani Richardson and Carolyn Mickel*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Fred Stewart II and Tyler Collins*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Janice Kemp and Triniti Williams*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

Right to left:

***Timothy Huffman and Ira Sims*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Wallace Simmons and Eric Allums*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Taylor Falls and Deborah Hackworth*, from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

***Michael-Anthony Allen and George Washington,* from the series *The Birmingham Project*, 2012**
Archival pigment prints mounted on Dibond
Rennie Collection, Vancouver

The photographer Dawoud Bey rose to prominence in the 1970s as a street photographer, capturing the dynamism of Harlem and its residents. When Bey eventually turned to portraiture in the 1990s, he continued to use his camera to valorize everyday life in African-American communities. *The Birmingham Project* (2012)—a series which commemorates the 1963 murders of four Black girls by members of the Ku Klux Klan at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and of two young men in the resulting protests—furthers this goal in response to the legacy of the civil rights movement.

In the early 1960s, photographs of Black protesters attacked by fire hoses and police dogs cemented Birmingham as the epicenter of the Black freedom fight. Yet Bey's intimate portraits eschew the dramatic didacticism of those iconic images, offering an alternative model for documenting political struggle. The drama of Bey's images derives not from the brutality of injustice but from the direct gaze of the sitters, who confront and implicate the viewer. The series is composed of diptychs: one image of a child photographed at the same age as the bombing victims when they were murdered, and one of an adult at the age the victims would have been had they lived. This juxtaposition creates a narrative that is open to themes of violence, memorialization, and intergenerational trauma without being overdetermined by them.

These photographs are a potent reminder of the ever-present existential threats that still menace African-American communities, as Black churches and Black people remain targets of white supremacist terrorism, and also stand as testaments to resilience.

—MH

Charles Gaines
b. 1944, Charleston, SC

***Manifestos 3*, 2018**
Two graphite drawings on paper, monitor, pedestal, two speakers, hanging speaker shelves
Single-channel video, sound, color; 15:53 min
Love, Luck & Faith Foundation

Charles Gaines, an innovator of Conceptual art since the 1960s, creates photographs, drawings, and works on paper that mine the rules of systems such as language, aesthetics, and politics while acknowledging viewers' subjective responses.

Gaines turns revolutionary manifestos into musical notation. In *Manifestos 3*, his source texts are a 1967 speech delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Newcastle University, in which King decries racism, poverty, and war as the major problems in global society, and James Baldwin's 1957 essay "Princes and Powers," in which the writer addresses questions of Black unity, diversity, and cultural identity and their relevance to struggles against Western colonialism. Transforming these texts into a set of graphite drawings, a single-channel video in which the texts scroll slowly across blue screens, and a musical score, Gaines creates a direct relationship between art, politics, and rhetoric—rendering the concept of the manifesto visceral.

In this installation, visual art is song, and music is visible. For the musical scores, Gaines uses a system whereby letters are connected to notes, an approach associated with the Baroque compositional and notational tradition. Resting on multiple transcriptional systems, the installation treats political speech and manifestos as both historical documents and living tools of expression, touching epitaphs and strong calls to actions.

—MZ

Daniel LaRue Johnson
b. 1938, Los Angeles, CA; d. 2017, New York, NY

***Freedom Now, Number 1, August 13, 1963–January 14*, 1964**
Pitch on canvas with "Freedom Now" button, broken doll, hacksaw, mousetrap, flexible tube and wood
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Given Anonymously, 1965

As a student at the Chouinard Art Institute in the early 1960s, Daniel LaRue Johnson began making textured dioramic assemblages that addressed the intensification of mob and state-sanctioned anti-Black violence that gave rise to the civil rights movement. A close attention to both commemoration and craftsmanship characterizes Johnson's approach. In 1963 he created *Yesterday*, a meditation on the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, in which Ku Klux Klan members bombed a Black church, murdering four Black children.

Johnson began to work on *Freedom Now, Number 1* in August 1963, the month in which the March on Washington was held. This mixed-media assemblage, from the *Black Constructions* series, was created while the artist traveled through the American South. During his travels, Johnson collected materials, including a broken doll, a hacksaw, a mousetrap, a flexible tube, wood, and a "Freedom Now" button—an artifact of the Congress of Racial Equality, an activist group that organized sit-ins and freedom rides in protest of segregation. Johnson obscures the objects' appearance with pitch, a resin used for waterproofing boats, but also for tarring people in acts of public torture. In doing so, he squashes, tears, and conceals these materials so that they are not immediately visible. Johnson invites viewers of *Freedom Now* to note how instruments that induce anti-Black injury are not always immediately recognizable as a means of violence. Directing attention to palpable but unacknowledged or suppressed procedures of unmaking Black life, the painting addresses how histories of Black resistance are crushed and painted over.

—Mlondolozi Zondi

Jennie C. Jones
b. 1968, Cincinnati, OH

***Score for Sustained Blackness Set 3*, 2016**
Acrylic paint, collage on paper; 10 parts
Courtesy the artist, PATRON Gallery, Chicago, and Alexander Gray Associates, New York

Jennie C. Jones identifies as both a sonic and visual artist. Her work interweaves the visual vocabulary of minimalism with the experimentalism of jazz, breaking down superficial distinctions between white and Black avant-gardes to revise canonical narratives of American modernism. Taking a collage-like approach to history, she gathers and juxtaposes multiple traditions to expand the horizon of artistic possibilities in the present.

In a suite of works on paper collectively titled *Scores for Sustained Blackness*, Jones reworks the visual language of sheet music into sparse black-and-white compositions. The thin parallel lines that populate the works evoke music staffs; unmoored from their strict horizontality, however, they become the content itself rather than simply a container for it. These blank staffs recall John Cage's *4'33"* (1952), a piece of music that similarly lacks notes. While Cage's silent composition is a temporal singularity—a musical event with a clear beginning and end—*Scores for Sustained Blackness*, in contrast, emphasizes an act of extension, support, and maintenance. The work poses a critical question: what would it mean to sustain Blackness, to care for it, and allow it to continue indefinitely? A score is a visual representation of music that abstracts time and sound. Jones has described her scores as a "time signature" for Blackness, a way of thinking about race through tempo and rhythm. Employing the language of abstraction, Jones uses time to engage with Blackness without having to define it.

—MH

Kahlil Joseph
b. 1981, Seattle, WA

***Alice™ (you don't have to think about it)*, 2016**
Single-channel HD video, color, sound; 18 min
Courtesy the artist

Collaboration and improvisation are important methods for artist Kahlil Joseph, who has worked on videos with musicians such as Blvck Spvde, Flying Lotus, Sampha, Kendrick Lamar, and Beyoncé. For *Black Mary* (2017), a collaboration with singer Alice Smith, Joseph invited musicians for a jam session in Harlem; he challenged himself to capture Smith's artistry, while preserving her intention to renounce fame and celebrity. To picture the community of Harlem in *Fly Paper* (2017), the artist studied photographer Roy DeCarava's portraits of jazz musicians such as Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, and John Coltrane. Joseph's practice asserts Harlem's ongoing impact as a Black creative epicenter.

In *Alice™ (you don't have to think about it)* (2016), Joseph again captures Smith during a recording session, picturing the process using intimate close-angle lenses, blurred shots, and suspended movement. Smith's undulating voice imparts an acute sense of grief that both artists were experiencing during the session: the filming took place shortly after Smith's grandmother passed away and Joseph's brother, Noah Davis, died following a prolonged illness.

Joseph documents the session with an attention to mundane gesture that avoids deliberate voyeurism and amplifies tension and contradiction. This tension arises in part from the difficulty of filming Smith without making her into an icon when the camera is an instrument that traditionally ushers subjects into increased public attention. Another tension lies in the act of capturing improvisation on record and film: *Alice™* invites the viewer to ask if improvisation and recording are antithetical or if improvisation is already, in some sense, a recording itself.

—MZ

Deana Lawson
b. 1979, Rochester, NY

Left to right:

***Congregation*, 2012**
Pigment print
Courtesy the artist, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

***Funereal Wallpaper*, 2013**
Pigment print
Courtesy the artist, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

***Jouvert*, 2013**
Pigment print
Courtesy the artist, Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago, and Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York

Deana Lawson is known for developing close relationships with her subjects and calls the resulting images "visual testimonies" of her expanded community. Best known for her posed and highly stylized interior scenes, Lawson positions the body as a site of personal and communal histories. Themes of family, spirituality and religion, romance, and domesticity are all explored through the combined languages of vernacular family photography, portraiture, and documentary.

Congregation (2012) positions the viewer above the heads and faces of a group gathered under the auspices of religion; we are removed from the congregation itself but perceive its sense of unity and communal belonging. By contrast, *Jouvert* (2013) places viewers on the same level as the photograph's subjects; we are thrown into the middle of the festivities. The celebration of J'ouvert has its origins in Carnival masquerade balls thrown by French colonialists in the Caribbean in the late eighteenth century. Enslaved people, who were banned from the white celebrations, held their own smaller versions that incorporated their own rituals. J'ouvert festivities signal the start of Carnival, a celebration traditionally associated with the subversion of hierarchies and power relationships. In contrast to both images of outdoor gatherings, *Funereal Wallpaper* (2013) is devoid of bodies. A pervasive sense of emptiness haunts the image; it is we, the viewers, who populate the scene, immersed in a space of grief and thus compelled to take part in mourning.

—MS

Julia Phillips
b. 1985, Hamburg, Germany

***Drainer*, 2018**
Ceramic, steel cable, and concrete
Marciano Art Foundation

Julia Phillips is a sculptor who works primarily in ceramics and metal. The artist often invents tools and names them in the corresponding titles, which explain the functions of the fictitious devices and designate an imagined actor/acted-upon relationship. Though these apparatuses are never meant to be used, they produce psychological and physical terror in their straightforward medical presentations, which allude to systems of clinical scrutiny against living bodies. The metal tools are often accompanied by fragmentary representations of the human form made from fragile materials such as ceramic, impressions cast from the artist's own body.

In *Drainer* (2018), a ceramic cast of the pelvic area bent at the waist hangs from steel cables above a gray concrete shower drain. The side of the ceramic pelvis that faces downward has a matte-black surface, while the bodily reds and blues of the glazed side evoke entrails and veins. The cast's color and form indicate a black woman's body, though the artist has said she resists biological identifications in her titles, which never include gendered language. The physical torquing of the partial cast suggests the possibility that pain or injury has compelled her bent-over position. The floor-bound concrete drain awaits that which flows from the fleshy fold of a stomach over the tops of thighs, a movement whose compression and forced pressure on the body result in the titular action. *Drainer*, like Phillips's other sculptures, leads viewers to contend with the internal and external forces that condition living bodies today.

—MS

Sable Elyse Smith
b. 1986, Los Angeles, CA

Left to right:

***8345 Nights*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist, JTT, New York, and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8401 Nights*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist; JTT, New York and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8400 Days*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist; JTT, New York and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8336 Nights*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist, JTT, New York, and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8345 Days*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist, JTT, New York, and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

***8440 Days*, 2020**
Digital C-print, suede, artist frame
Courtesy the artist; JTT, New York and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

Sable Elyse Smith works in video, sculpture, photography, installation, and text. Her work explores the myriad ways carceral and anti-Black violence is wrought upon bodies, resulting in physical and psychic wounds that are both personal and communal. This topic is personal to the artist—she has made works that expose the choreographies of visiting her father in each of the six prisons in which he has been incarcerated over the past twenty years. Smith resists mainstream narratives of incarceration and instead errs toward the personal stories of her subjects, which can be recognized by those with similar experiences.

In the artist's series of works taken inside prisons, Smith reworks the tradition of family portraiture. Family members visiting their loved ones in prison are able to commemorate their time together by having Polaroids taken of the family by other inmates or sometimes prison guards. The people posing for the image stand against murals painted by the inmates themselves, who are usually not compensated for their labor. Recalling the tradition of studio portraiture, the murals—often depicting dreamed tropical landscapes—provide an escapist backdrop, removed from the bleak space of the prison visitation rooms. The artist presents these images against black suede backgrounds and often obscures the facial features of subjects, an act of protection to preserve the privacy of the family. The photographs are evidence of intimate moments, yet they are captured within the surveillance state of the prison—and by an employee of the prison itself. The Polaroids cost a few dollars and can only be purchased by inmates on behalf of their visitors. Of course, the prisoners must weigh the cost of the Polaroid against their earnings, which typically range between twelve and forty cents per hour. This exploitative and insular economy becomes the locus for this body of work.

—Molly Superfine

Tyshawn Sorey
b. 1980, Newark, NJ

***Pillars*, 2018**
Audio recording; 3 hours 51 min
Performers: Tyshawn Sorey, Stephen Haynes, Ben Gerstein, Todd Neufeld, Joe Morris, Carl Testa, Mark Helias, and Zach Rowden
Courtesy the artist

Tyshawn Sorey is a multi-instrumentalist musician whose complex musical scores roam across genres and musical idioms. Sorey, who first gained notice as a percussionist, has released a number of critically acclaimed albums, including *Alloy* (2014) and *Verisimilitude* (2017)—both lauded as complex works of melancholy. While *Alloy* is suspenseful and contemplative, the sounds of *Verisimilitude* evoke theorist Fred Moten's connection between moaning and mourning. As a musician, Sorey moves seamlessly from percussion to piano. He is interested not only in playing multiple instruments, but in exhausting a number of different methods for playing a single instrument. These include using his mouth to blow on the surface of an instrument not traditionally played that way and sliding the palm of his hand down the strings of a guitar, an approach that requires a revision of conventional technique.

Pillars is a gathering of eight musicians playing electric and acoustic guitars, percussion, and brass instruments. As Sorey has explained of his hybridized form of improvisation and composition, "The idea of what is composed and what is improvised is pointless." During certain passages, a drum rolls for minutes on end, while at others, quiet is reasserted until a horn lets out a sound like a distant cry, a hushed grievance. Taking inspiration from a range of ritualistic and experimental precedents, including Tibetan ceremonial music and free jazz, the work disorients, runs across and away from the lines that distinguish tonality and atonality, jazz and new classical music, composition and freestyle.

—MZ

Henry Taylor
b. 1958, Ventura, CA

***Untitled*, 2020**
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy the artist, Blum & Poe and Hauser & Wirth

Henry Taylor has consistently expanded the language of portraiture and history painting, blending personal experiences and collective memories to document the lives of African Americans and reimagine America's collective past and future. His subjects range from friends and family to famous musicians, athletes, and political leaders. Taylor has also liberally drawn on the found material of everyday life by painting on discarded objects and relying on chance encounters with strangers for new subjects. He has often incorporated images of historical figures to celebrate and amplify Black achievement, while remaining attentive to the equally powerful experiences of hope, desire, celebration, and loss that are felt by individuals from all walks of life.

Taylor has created several works that examine the inseparability of grief and mourning from the reality of the life of Black Americans today. His portraits memorializing Sean Bell and Philando Castile, victims of police shootings ten years apart, take different approaches to addressing the particularly American forms of horror and injustice that these events represent. These works are both journalistic documents of the seemingly unending succession of similar incidents across the country, and highly personal, emotional responses to the way in which these events remain tragically familiar. In his new work created for this exhibition, Taylor combines pop culture and politics in another highly personalized composition. A young Black man stares at a rotating turntable while an ominous figure resembling a judicial figure looms in the background. The text in the work, "Every Brotha Has a Record," inscribed at the top of the painting suggests both the influential history of Black music in America and the American judicial and carceral system that is disproportionately punitive towards Black men. The "soul" record playing on the turntable again reflects music history, as well as suggesting that the central figure is contemplating existential questions of identity and grief.

Nari Ward
b. 1963, St. Andrew, Jamaica

***Peace Keeper*, 1995; re-created 2020**
Hearse, grease, mufflers, and feathers
Courtesy the artist, Lehmann Maupin, New York/Hong Kong/Seoul, and Galleria Continua, San Gimignano/Beijing/Les Moulins/Havana

Through his collection and manipulation of found objects—many of which he mines from his adopted neighborhood in Harlem—Nari Ward creates sculptures and installations that explore issues of race, poverty, religion, and consumer culture.

Ward first exhibited *Peace Keeper* (1995; recreated 2020) at the 1995 Whitney Biennial, an exhibition seen by many as a retreat from the identity politics that infamously surrounded the Biennial's previous iteration. That Ward's work fell outside of the purview of the 1993 exhibition is a testament both to the limited conceptualization of "identity politics" that continues to dominate art and politics today and to the artist's oblique and poetic approach to questions of Blackness. Destroyed after its initial presentation but re-created for this exhibition, *Peace Keeper* is a monumental sculpture composed of a hearse encased in tar and feathers. The hearse sets the work in a funerary context, thus connoting commemoration and respect. But tarring and feathering is an act of humiliation, vengeance, and vigilantism. Ward emphasizes the sense of an interrupted procession by placing a cage around the car, immobilizing it and framing it as an object of aesthetic contemplation. Rusted metal pipes litter the floor like industrial bones, and mufflers hang ominously overhead. The title *Peace Keeper*—along with the work's evocation of death, terror, and imprisonment—clarifies the stakes of Ward's longstanding engagement with grief and the many forms it can take in a world that refuses to embrace the full humanity of Black life.

—Maya Harakawa

Carrie Mae Weems
b. 1953, Portland, OR

***All the Boys (Blocked 1)*, 2016**
Archival pigment print and silkscreened panel mounted on gesso board
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Floor 2

***All the Boys (Blocked 2)*, 2016**
Archival pigment print and silkscreened panel mounted on gesso board
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***All the Boys (Blocked 3)*, 2016**
Archival pigment print and silkscreened panel mounted on gesso board
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Left to right:

***Mourning*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***Birmingham Rising*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Iris print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***The Endless Weeping of Women*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Right to left:

***Looking Forward/Looking Back*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***The Assassination of Medgar, Malcolm and Martin*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

***The Capture of Angela*, from the series *Constructing History*, 2008**
Archival pigment print
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

For the last four decades, Carrie Mae Weems has created a body of work that distills the complexities of representation, power, and invisibility. Predominantly working in photography, Weems's highly choreographed scenes and appropriated pictures, which are often accompanied by text or video, mine the functions of the photographic apparatus as well as its performative effects.

For her *Constructing History* series (2008), Weems worked with art students from Savannah College of Art and Design and Atlanta residents to restage well-known moments from the civil rights movement, including the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the imprisonment of Angela Davis. The resulting images feature incongruous details and makeshift scenic design as a means of deploying the Brechtian device of alienation, in which the apparatus used to make the image is consciously revealed. This awareness of the constructed nature of images also extends to the staging of bodies in Weems's scenes: in pictures such as *The Assassination of Medgar, Malcolm and Martin* and *Birmingham Rising*, the figures facing away from the camera defy the first rule of the theater: to never turn one's back to the audience.

Weems continues to tackle the theme of mourning in the photographic series *All the Boys* (2016), which responds to recent killings of young African-American men, and the performance *Past Tense* (2016), in which the artist speaks blatantly about the refusal to give proper burial to victims of police brutality such as Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, and Michael Brown. As Weems explains it: "Black people are turned away from, not turned toward. We bear the mark of Cain."

—MZ